THE INDIAN INSTITUTE OF PUBLIC ADMINISTRATION
Centre for Training and Research in Municipal Administration
NEW DELHI.

SEMINAR ON CABINET SYSTEM IN MUNICIPAL GOVERNMENT

Programme of the Seminar

September 15, 1969

10.00 a.m.	Welcome Address by Dr.Jagannadham
10.15 a.m.	Inaugural speech by the Hon'ble Minister for Health, F.P., W.H. & U.D.
10.40 a.m.	COFFEE BREAK
11.00 to 12 noon	Presentation of paper by Shri M.Bhattacharya & Discussion
12 to 1.30 p.m.	Presentation of paper by Shri C.B. Rao Presentation of paper by Prof.M.A.Muttalib & Discussion
1.30 p.m.	LUNCH
3.00 to 5 p.m.	Presentation of paper by Prof.Chetkar Jha Dr.Ali Ashraf Discussion

September 16,1969

10.00 to 1.00 p.m.	Presentation of paper by Dr.R.B. Das & Shri R.S.Gupta Dr.Z.Khan Discussion
1.00 p.m.	LUNCH
3.00 p.m. - 5 p.m.	General Discussion and Concluding Session

THE INDIAN INSTITUTE OF PUBLIC ADMINISTRATION
Centre for Training and Research in Municipal Administration
NEW DELHI.

List of Participants

Andhra Pradesh	M. Balliah, Municipal Councillor Municipal Corporation, Hyderabad.
	Shri A. Shankar Rao, Municipal Councillor Municipal Corporation, Hyderabad.
Delhi	Shri Balraj Khanna, Deputy M ayor Delhi Municipal Corporation, Delhi.
	Shri Ram Lal, Municipal Councillor Shri Kundanlal Manchandr Mr. Satish Chandra Khandelwal Mr. Mulkh Raj Mr. Jaiprakash Goel Dr. Bhimsen Bansal Kumari Sakunthala Sulhan
Gujarat	Dr. Kumudchandra Chimanlal Desai Councillor, Municipal Corporation, Baroda.
	Shri Sanat Kumar Maganlal Mehta Councillor, Municipal Corporation, Baroda.
Maharashtra	Shri Vinaya Kumar Parashar President, Municipal Council, Akola.
	Haji Mohammad Usman Farooqui, Chairman Public Works Committee, Municipal Council Akola.
	Dr. S.G. Patel, Municipal Corporation Greater Bombay. (Leader of the House)
	Shri M.G. Joshi, (Leader of the Opposition) Bombay Municipal Corporation.
Mysore	Shri M.R. Shettar, Mayor Hubli-Dharwar Municipal Committee.
	Shri G.R. Vanhallimath, Councillor H.D.M.C. Hubli.
	Shri A.P. Jhagirdar, Councillor, H.D.M.C. Hubli-Dharwar.

Tamil Nadu	Shri M. Muthuswamy, Minister Local Administration, Fort.St. George Madras.
	Shri Munuswamy (Leader DMK Municipal Party Madras Corporation. Madras.
	Shri K. Kuppuswamy, (Leader Congress Municipal Party) Municipal Corporation Madras.
	Shri P. Krishnan, Councillor Salem Municipality, Salem
	Shri G. Selvaraj, Councillor Salem Municipality.
Kerala	Shri C.R. Dass, Municipal Councillor Municipal Corporation, Trivandrum.
	Shri N. Subramonia Pillai, Councillor Municipal Corporation, Trivandrum.
Punjab	Shri Krishan Lal, Finance & Local Govt. Minister, Government of Punjab.
	Shri Panna Lal Mahajan, President Municipal Committee, Amritsar.
	Shri Sardari Lal Arora, Municipal Commissioner, Municipal Committee, Amritsar.

Experts

Prof. M.A. Muttalib, Head, Department of Public Administration Osmania University, Hyderabad (AP).

Prof. Chetkar Jha, Professor of Political Science, Patna College, Patna.

Prof. Ziauddin Khan, Head of the Department of Public Administration, University of Rajasthan, Jaipur.

Dr.Ali Ashraf, Assistant Professor, Humanities and Social Sciences, Indian Institute of Technology, Kanpur.

Shri C.B. Rao, Ex-Mayor, Municipal Corporation, Allahabad.

Prof. R.B. Das, Head, Department of Public Administration University of Lucknow, Lucknow.

Brief Summary of Proceedings of the Seminar
on
"Cabinet Sys tem in Municipal Government"
September 15, 1969.

[NOTE: This is a gist of discussions. The Proceedings will be published in more details later.]

Forenoon Session
10 a.m. to 11 a.m.

Prof. Jagannadham, acting Director of the IIPA thanked Shri B.S. Murthy, Minister of Health, Family Planning, Works, Housing and Urban Development for coming in our midst and consenting to inaugurate this Seminar. Prof. Jagannadham stressed the importance of the subject of the Seminar and pointed out the need for decentralisation of power to local units of government. He thanked the participants for attending the Seminar.

In his inaugural speech Shri B.S. Murthy, the Hon. Minister, thanked the IIPA and its Municipal centre for arranging this S eminar which, he thought, was of considerable practical importance. He dwelt at length on the problems of municipal administration arising out of growing urbanisation. Municipal government, he said, had an important role to play in providing local services and ensuring popular participation in local administration. He observed that a local government must be fully representative and responsive to the needs of the local people; it must ensure full utilisation of resources; it must be effective and efficient; and last but not least, it must provide opportunity for the development of local leadership. He observed that although cabinet system functioned quite successfully at the Central and State levels, but it was yet to be seen if such a system would

function well at local level also. He hoped that the participants in the Seminar would examine fully the possibilities of introducing the cabinet form of government at the municipal level.

COFFEE BREAK: Business Session 11 a.m. to 1.30 p.m.
Chairman:- Shri P.L. Mahajan.

Shri M. Bhattacharya was requested to present the working paper entitled "Management Problems in Municipal Government and the Relevance of the Cabinet System". Shri Bhattacharya discussed the internal management problems arising out of present municipal structure. He pointed out that the corporation form of government was suffering from a delibitating conflict of authorities, due to statutory fragmentation of authority among coordinate authorities, namely, the Corporation, the Commissioner, and the standing committee or committees. The absence of a single focus of authoity led to immense problems concerning policy making and administration. Similarly at the level of district municipalities or smaller municipalities, the prevalent council-committee system posed some other problems of management. There is a tendency toward disintegration of administration because of the constitution of a number of committees, each entrusted with specific functions. He pointed out that in India the committee system could not flourish in the same way as it did in Britain. Even where the executive officer was appointed to strengthen executive administration the relationship between the councillors and the executive officer has not been very happy. There have been complaints of political interference in day-to-day administration and consistent

under-utilisation of the services of appointed officials and reluctance to delegate powers to the appointed executive. Shri Bhattacharya referred to the Mayor-in-Council Bill in this connection, which was passed by the Metropolitan Council of Delhi in 1966 and forwarded to the Parliament for legislation. He thought that the Mayor-in-Council System was a close approximation to a cabinet system of government, if the imperfections of the proposed system could be carefully avoided, the Mayor-in-Council system, he observed, could be given a chance to operate. He thought that this Mayor-in-Council System could be accepted as a starting point for full-fledged discussion on future shape of municipal reform in India.

The next paper was presented by Shri C.B. R ao, ex-Mayor of Allahabad. According to Shri Rao, there was no difficulty in establishing democracy at the local level, and in his opinion municipal government should be made more efficient and powerful. He accepted in principle the desirability of the cabinet system of government at the municipal level, although he maintained that careful thought should be given to adapt the system to the local level. He observed that there was no getting away from party system these days and it would be really good if a majority party could work single mindedly for the betterment of the cities through a small executive consisting of elected leaders. Once the system of government would be efficient and virile, he observed, there would be more and more of talented people attracted toward municipal government. In his conception of the cabinet system,

the municipal commissioner would slide into the position of a chief secretary working under the political executive.

Another paper was presented by Prof. Mutalib of Osmania University. Prof. Mutalib has long been a supporter of the cabinet system of government at the municipal level. He described the structural peculiarities of municipal government in different parts of India, and in his opinion an undiluted cabinet form of municipal executive could be favoured for the metropolitan and medium-sized cities. He said that if the local bodies were to be the training grounds for politicians, there should be identical forms of government at all levels - national, state and local. Secondly, in his opinion, introduction of cabinet form of executive at the municipal level would help improve the working of cabinet system at State level. Thirdly, the power and prestige attached to cabinet form of executive, and the scope for service to the people would attract talented councillors to the municipal authorities. Lastly Prof. Mutalib observed that with the improvement of the quality of political leadership, municipal administration can expect protection against the excesses of local democracy.

After the presentation of papers Shri R.N. Chopra, Commissioner, Municipal Corporation of Delhi spoke briefly in favour of the cabinet system of government at the municipal level. He was of the opinion that authority and responsibility must go hand in hand together. At the moment, in corporation administration authority was divorced from responsibility. This, he said, was responsible for the sorry state of affairs

in corporation administration. He observed that the Commissioner's position under the present set-up was very precarious. He was not a political man but he was placed in a political situation. A Mayor-in-Council form of government, he pointed out, would combine authority and responsibility together and the Commissioner would still be there as the Chief executive officer.

The next speaker make a distinction between parliamentary democracy and local municipal democracy. In his opinion municipal government was concerned with practical day-to-day problems relating to water supply, drainage, education and so on and so forth, and these had little to do with politics. He favoured the idea of more and more participation of councillors in the running of the municipal machinery. So he did not favour the idea of cabinet system of municipal government and supported committee system in its place.

The next participant favoured the adoption of cabinet system of government at the municipal level and in his opinion more power should be given to the elected wing. He observed that just as the University Grants Commission was a statutory authority for giving grants to the universities, a statutory finance commission could similarly be thought of for giving grants to the municipal authorities.

Another speaker observed that there was no difficulty in introducing cabinet system because even at present the majority party was virtually running the municipal administration.

The next participant favoured the idea of an efficient and powerful executive - a small but strong group com bining

both authority and responsibility, which, in his opinion, would be able to deliver the goods.

Another speaker objected to the introduction of cabinet system at the municipal level. I n hi s opinion municipal government should give opportunity to as many councillors as possible for running the machinery of administration. He approvingly quoted the provisions of the Maharashtra Municipalities Act, 1965 and suggested that the functional committees provided in the Act would go a long way in accommodating the municipal councillors in the business of municipal administration.

The next participant spoke in favour of the cabinet system of government at the municipal level. He observed that there was no getting away from party system. So, he thought that the municipalities should have longer terms, say for five years. In his opinion, executive councillors headed by a chief executive councillor, would look after the administration of municipal functional departments.

Thus ended the morning session.

****

3 p.m. to 5 p.m.

Chairman:
Shri C.B. Rao

In the afternoon session the first paper was presented by Prof. Chetakar Jha. According to Prof. Jha, the most important thing is the nature of politics rather than the form of government. He pointed out the prevailing psychology of power among the councillors. A synchological malady, he sai needed a kind of psycho-therapy as remedy. Hence, he favoured

the increasing association of councillors with local administration rather than their alienation. In his opinion at the present moment the devisive forces at play at the municipal level would stand in the way of the adoption of cabinet system. He thought that only after a sufficiently long period of experience of working at local levels, a management Board of the Maud Committee type or a cabinet system could be thought of.

The next paper was presented by Dr. Ali Ashraf, who disgreed with some of the assumptions of Prof. Jha. He pointed out that existing system of government at the municipal level was inadequate and it could not provide dynamic leadership. A cabinet system of government, in his opinion, presupposes a stable two party system which is not easy to come by. In such circumstances he favoured the idea of strong mayor system of government for the Indian cities.

When the discussions started one speaker explained the working of the Bombay Municipal Corporation. He pointed out that by convention the leader of the House in Bombay Corporation was a very influential and powerful man. He is consulted invariably by the executive head, the commissioner, on all important matters. Similarly, the Leader of the House himself takes the Commissioner in confidence, whenever important policy issues crop up. He accepted in principle the necessity of cabinet system of government at the municipal level and observed that it was impossible to avoid the role of political parties in municipal government. At the same time, the speaker emphasized the importance of constituting

advisory committees for giving opportunities to councillors for taking part in municipal administration.

Another participant spoke in favour of the cabinet system of government which he thought would do away with the present conflict between the executive and the deliberative wings.

The next speaker supported the idea of introducing cabinet system of government at the municipal level and refuted the earlier argumented put forward by different speakers against this system. He thought that devolution by the State government of more sources of fund would remove the difficulty about meeting additional costs due to the cabinet system Secondly, in his opinion it is not true that efficiency suffers at the hands of elected councillors. In this connection he compared the working of a particular corporation during and after a period of supersession. He observed that the efficiency and revenue of the corporation increased more during the regime of the elected council.

Another participant accepted in principle the desirability of introducing cabinet system of government and in his opinion local government could be made more powerful by delegation of mor e powers by the State Government.

The next speaker thought that the opposition parties could be accommodated in committees like the Estimates Committee and the Public Accounts Committee which are to be found at the Central and State levels.

By way of conclusion the Chairman observed that the Cabinet system had the advantage of combining responsibility

and authority together. He thought that in a democracy politics was unavoidable and universal. As regards the fear of some that the minority would be neglected in a cabinet system, the Chairman pointed out that at the local level the councillors were living face to face with their constituencies; so anybody who would dare to neglect the constituents would have to face the consequences in elections.

Thus ended the afternoon session.

THE CASE FOR A STRONG MAYOR

by

Ali Ashraf*

The object of this paper is to indicate the administrative requirements of the city Government, evaluate the existing system of municipal bodies and suggest guidelines for reforms.

I

It is almost universally accepted the the local authorities have not functioned as well as is desirable or necessary to solve mounting urban problems and provide adequate civic services. The weight of the public opinion, both of the people and the experts, finds the root cause of civic maladministration in the currupt practices of the elected representatives, their particularistic interests and parochial outlook. It is also alleged that the councillors are not content with policy-making and interfere with administration as a result of which the officers cannot discharge their responsibilities with efficiency and impartiality. Almost all the official Committees and Commissions, set up from time to time by various governments to enquire into the working of local bodies, have concurred in their judgement that party politics have been the bane of local government.

This facile judgement has set up the fashion for general thinking on local bodies, but in doing so, it has also diverted attention from a correct diagnosis of the problems that beset City Governments. Before we discuss these problems, it is necessary to examine

* Humanities & Social Sciences Department, Indian Institute of Technology, Kanpur-16

more closely the allegation about political interference in local administration.

First, it is very difficult to maintain in practice the distinction between policy-formulation and policy-implementation. Any knowledge of the legislative process or policy-making is enough to indicate that the directions of new policies emerge atleast in part, from the actual needs of administration and the administrators provide the basic raw materials for policy making. This is what happens always always in all local as well as higher governments. The following observation by the Deputy Municipal Corporation of the Bombay Municipal Corporation gives an insight into the actual processes of Municipal policy making.

"Though the Act specifies that it is the executive power that vests in the Commisioner and the policy making is the sphere of the Municipal Corporation, yet both by practice and convention as well as the necessities of the situation, the Commissioner has to show a lot of initiative in respect of framing the policies also. The Corporation normally does not initiate any policy, especially in any matter which has a financial repercussion. The normal rule of the Corporation proceedings, when they want a new thing not emanating from the Commissioner to be done is to request the commissioner, to consider the feasibility of doing that thing and it is only after the Commissioner reports on it that the Corporation takes a final decision." [1]

---

1 S.M.Y. Sastry, Studies in Municipal Administration of Greater Bombay, 1969, pp. 33-34.

The learned author goes on to say that

"The Corporation being composed of laymen is not in a position to workout details of any policy. In the ultimate analysis it is the Commissioner that frames the policy and places before the Corporation - sometimes alternatives and sometimes a single policy - for the approval of the Corporation. The Commissioner is not a passive agent carrying out the dictates of the Corporation but is an authority who is actively associated in formulating the policy itself'.

These observations, coming as they do from an experienced officer of a Municipal Corporation, should carry additional weight besides theoretical arguments about the difficulties in separating policy making from policy execution. This is a case of executive role in policy making.

In the second place, the fact of political interference in actual administration may have substantial basis but it has to be understood in the right perspective. It is characteristic of Indian administration in general that people's demands, instead of being channelled through policy-decisions, are largely made upon the administration itself. Pressures on the bureaucracy and administration lead to interminable problems of adjusting sectional and particularistic demands to available resources. Also when the bureaucrats yield to such pressures, this is as much a reflection on the bureaucrats' helplessness, weakness, or political predilections as on the politicians' propensity

to exert such pressures. In an institution based on popular participation, such pressures are bound to be exerted. This is especially so where political parties and other institutions are not strong enough properly and effectively to articulate the demands of the people. The remedy to this problem does not lie in lamenting the fact of political interference but in making such interference unnecessary or at any rate least harmful.

This goal can be achieved partly by strengthening, streamlining and rationalizing municipal bureaucracy which is notorious for serious defects in its organization, methods of work and recruitment. Where municipal employees owe their jobs, promotion and other benefits to the patronage of municipal councillors, it is but natural that these employees should feel themselves obliged to do things at the bidding of individual councillors. It is true that a good deal of interpersonal relationship between the municipal staff and councillors is bound to persist and survive any formal reform. It is also true however that any attempt to reform the problem of political interference cannot succeed unless municipal officers and employees are recruited on the basis of their professional and technical competence, and unless municipal service is made meaningful and attractive in terms of their personal as well as professional fulfilment.

Having emphasized the paramount need for an efficient, capable and independent municipal bureaucracy. I like to turn my attention to such other aspects of municipal administration as are vital to an improvement of administrative capability. By

administrative capability I mean the ability of a local authority to solve problems and respond effectively to the challenges thrown to it by new situations, new demands and new requirements. Such administrative capacity requires not merely the technical knowledge or managerial ability to run a department but an awareness of longterm problems, an assessment of potential resources, taking up initiative and mobilizing popular support in favour of development programmes. This function of assessing the requirements and setting the goals involves a looking beyond the present, projecting into the future and relating all these to what is wanted by the public. My submission is that this function is essentially a political function. The goals and objectives and policy decisions regarding development must be set firmly by the policy makers. The help of technical experts and administrators must undoubtedly remain of inestimable value in examining the feasibility of these programmes, but the desirability of these goals, their priorities and their scope, must be determined by the leaders of the public opinion and the representatives of the people.

If these functions legitimately belong to the policy-makers, and if my contention is valid that policy and administration are inevitably intertwined, then it is necessary that from the point of view of development, the policy-maker must have the ultimate responsibility for the execution of the policy decisions. And for both the policy-making and policy-formulation he must be accountable to the community. I believe that this ultimate

accountability to the community is not only a test of self-govt. but also a condition for development. The relevance of such accountability from the viewpoint of local self-government is self-evident. What may not be equally clear is its relevance as a requirement for development. I like to emphasize here that accountability to the people is necessary to ensure consent and support more than the initiative of the people. The initiative must necessarily lie with the leaders, who have both constitutional and political obligation for development. The officials may also contribute to the initiation of ideas and programmes as in fact they do and are bound to do because of their knowledge of the actual problems and also their direct involvement in administration. But such initiative must be endorsed by the elected policy-makers, without whose support it is difficult to provide the wherewithal for development programmes. Let us take an example. Provision of better civic amenities requires argumentation of finances. A Commissioner cannot hope to raise the tax or impose any other financial burden on a section of the people without the concurrence and support of the elected representatives. Indeed it is an error to think that a municipal officer does not need the cooperation of the councillors in many other spheres of administration and can hope to carry out his duties without getting involved in many inter-personal relationship with either the councillors or the public at large. It is also an obvious limitation of the bureaucracy that its members cannot go to the public directly and seek their support and even

sacrifices for any development programme. The bureaucracy has the technical knowledge but lacks identification with the people. This identification is an advantage of the political leaders, it is also a source of political interference in administration. Wisdom lies in exploiting the advantage and minimizing the baneful effects of irresponsible political meddling. This I believe can be achieved if the ultimate executive as well as legislative responsibility is placed on the shoulders of the political leaders. If they want to make a mess of the local government, let them face the music. After all they cannot escape the consequences of their action for all times. Under the present system however the executive blames councillors for interference and councillors blame the executive for corruption and inefficiency. I believe it is good for the health, not only of democracy but also of the officers that the public leaders should be made to answer for whatever they do.

II

I propose now to examine the existing system of our local government especially in metropolitan cities, from the view of these requirements.

First, the system of municipal administration based on the duality of policy making and policy implementation by councillors and the Commissioner respectively, besides being a fiction sedulously cultivated by the experts and bureaucrats, precludes the development of the kind of executive leadership

that I have laid down as a condition for development. Such a local government is indeed a headless administration lacking in a clear focus on administrative leadership.

The councillors in the Corporation indulge in useless talking, discuss irrelevant political problems and debate specific grievances. A large body of councillors cannot be expected to engage in the kind of coherent, concerted and continuous thinking required for making policy decisions. This is true of all large legislative bodies, and is equally true of the general meeting of the councillors.

The councillors in Committees tend to be divided into various functional areas, and cannot take overall view of various problems. It is also a naive view of the character and caliber of councillors that they would all be interested in the major problems and their solution. Their vision is confined to small problems of the neighbourhood and the ways and means of redressing specific grievances rather than the evaluation of general policy.

The Commissioner by virtue of his statutory powers, is supposed to carry out the policy laid down by the councillors. Where he does take initiative for new proposals and programmes he is seriously limited by the financial and administrative strait jacket in which he operates. And also it is well-nigh impossible for a single official to keep his fingers on all aspects of municipal government.

The Mayor tends to be more a figurehead and a chairman then an actual executive head. The upshot of all this is that the municipal government is a government of checks, discards and conflicts rather than an administration with dynamic leadership.

In the second place, the state of local politics is such that unity of will and coherence of policy are hard to emerge. It is impossible for well organized political parties to throw up united and dynamic leadership so as to overcome the statutory lacuna in respect of drive and coherence in policy-making. A strong cohesive and properly-oriented political party could indeed overcome atleast some of the fragmentation in municipal government. The fact of the matter however is that political parties operating in most cities are numerous and divided. Where a political party is in a majority, it tends to be more a combination of factional groups then an integrated party. In the local elections these also figure, perhaps more prominently than at higher levels, considerations of more particularistic nature, the neighbourhood, the caste and kinship. The social notables and traditional leaders find it easier to dominate the local parties as well as local governments.

The particularistic and fragmented state of local politics makes it difficult to bring sound public interests to bear upon policy-making in the municipal government. It should also be remembered that there is no prospect in the foreseeable future for political parties and institutions that will work

towards the social and political integration of our cities. Already the trend at the state level is towards further disintegration of political parties.

The result of administrative fragmentation conjoined with lack of social and political integration can be seen in the condition of municipal government and the urban life.

III

My analysis reveals two things; firstly, the need of a clear focus for responsibility and leadership in the municipal executive, and secondly, the failure of political parties to fulfil this need. It is these two considerations that constitute the basic framework for the constitution of the right kind of municipal authority. The need for administrative leadership and the fact of political sterility in the present context of the city governments lead me to emphasize the paramount recommendation for a political executive. I would like to emphasize at the outset that a political executive does not in any way diminish the importance and role of an efficient municipal bureaucracy, but the bureaucracy must serve as an aid, and not a rival, to political leadership. The important role of the bureaucracy as advisor in policy making and execution of policy must remain unaffected, and must indeed be improved.

There are two conceivable ways in which a political executive can be provided - one is the cabinet form and the other is the presidential one. My next and final task in this paper

is to examine briefly the merits and appropriateness of both these for Indian cities.

Cabinet form: The Cabinet form of government can ensure concentration of both legislative and executive leadership in the hands of councillors. The merits of this form of government can be found in any text book and should be familiar to us in India. This form would ensure unity of governmental leadership coordination of policy and administration and a clear locus of responsibility for whatever is done or not done by the municipal government. This form of municipal government would obviously require either the Mayor to act as the Chairman of the Cabinet or provide another political head of the administration. The Executive Officer will be the head of the municipal establishment but responsible to the political chief, whether he is the Mayor or someone else. The relation between the political chief and the executive head should be similar to that now obtaining between a minister and his departmental secretary.

The success of the cabinet form of municipal government would however depend on stable and proper organization and working of the political parties. Instability in party organization or multiplicity of these parties contribute to the instability and uncertainty of the political executive, thus putting into jeopardy the efficient working of the system. It is a matter of personal assessment whether the prevailing party situation in our towns and cities is such as to encourage hopes for stability in party system. My own view is that

prospects for stability and discipline in party organizations are far from bright. The fear is in fact that the recurring political crises in some states are likely to extend to party organizations at lower levels. It therefore appears highly problematic that the cabinet system for municipal government will be able to function at all. Chronic instability might be the only outcome of any change in this direction.

The case for strong Mayor:

If the present system is defective and the cabinet system is difficult to operate in the political situation prevailing in this country, attention must be paid to an examination of a different alternative - vis, the adaptation of the Presidential system to municipal government. The great advantage of this system is that it ensures executive stability through the institution of a strong Mayor, directly elected by the electorate, and also unity of executive leadership. The strong Mayor is not dependent for his office on the support of the majority in the Corporation. It is true that he needs the majority support for his legislative and financial proposals. But a Mayor in his position should find it not beyond his resources to secure such support. Thus while the strong Mayor should manage to harness the support of the councillors for his policy decisions, his office is not dependent on such support.

There is another point in favour of the strong Mayor system. Such a Mayor, elected as he will be by the entire electorate, will necessarily have to identify himself with all sections of the

population and ensure the support of the largest number of the people. Thus such a Mayor is likely to be more representative of the public at large than individual councillors. He is thus likely to feel responsibility towards the entire community.

In the strong Mayor system, relations between the Mayor and the permanent Municipal employees is of council importance. In the U.S.A. it is customery for such a Mayor to have full powers of all appointments to municipal administration. I believe this is not necessary in Indian conditions, and the tradition of permanent municipal service should be retained.

The question may be raised. Why, is it at all necessary to have a political executive when, the political leadership in this country does not inspire hopes of constructive leadership and does not justify the confidence placed in such leadership. The answer to this question has been partly given while emphasizing the need and importance of (political) executive leadership in the municipal government. There is another more blunt answer. The dangers and deficiences inherent in irresponsible and unstable political leadership are not difficult to divine. However, if the fate of State, and indeed of the whole national, governments can be risked by entrusting them to the hands of political leaders, what is so great about local government, that such a risk cannot be taken on a relatively smaller scale. The country is after all engaged in an experiment in self-government, and this experiment is nothing but an act of faith. An experiment in full blooded democratic

development involves less risk at the local than at the national level. If the latter is allowed there is no reason why the local self-government should be curtailed. As was rightly pointed out by Lord Ripon in his famous minute, the system of local self-government was primarily meant for popular and political education but in course of time as increasing popular interest and experience were brought to bear upon local administration, improved efficiency was bound to follow.

THE CENTRE FOR TRAINING AND RESEARCH IN MUNICIPAL ADMINISTRATION

Seminar on

'Cabinet System in Municipal Government'

(September 15 & 16, 1969)

Cabinet System or New Strategy in Municipal Government

by

Dr. B.D. Raheja
D.S.Sc. (Syracuse, U.S.A.)

Indian Institute of Public Administration
NEW DELHI

Contents

I. Introductory

In the wake of rapid urban and metropolitan growth, the existing municipal government system is being called upon to deal with complicated problems - political, economic and social. The inadequacy and inefficiency, for the formulation of policies and implementation of programmes, of the Indian municipal government system is a common lament of civic leaders, politicians, administrators, technical experts and social scientists. In the last decade, there has been a conspicuous increase in the content and significance of the issues that municipal government system is expected to confront at present as well as in the future. With the passage of time, the modern trends towards the democratic socialism have stimulated the growth of governmental functions and the governments - Central as well as State - have demanded that the municipal government system assume more and more of these functions.

Urban growth and diversification are bringing about with them some sweeping changes in the administration and organization of the cities and towns. One of these has been the relationship between the deliberative and executive agencies, accompanied by the rise of professional management such as municipal cadres. A few years ago, the decisions were still being commonly made by a handful of nominated or elected councillors under the tutelage of the official president - invariably the head of the district administration known as the deputy commissioner or his subordinate. But as the cities are growing, to emerge eventually as metropolitan areas or regions, they have to evolve

new ways of administrative and organizational set up and to develop a brain and nervous system to comprehend its demographic and regional expansion and growth. And as the complications of urban growth - its financial problems, its housing needs and its intergovernmental relations - become even more complex, it becomes exceedingly difficult for the few individuals - nominated as well as elected - to tackle them effectively and adequately. Inevitably, the urban growth and diversification points the new modes and areas of decision-making or to put it bluntly, the traditional approaches have become outmoded and call for a collective and coordinated enterprise with the help of expertise and information system.

The students of public administration and urban government have argued that the difficulties of administrative and organizational coordination are beyond certain point, a limiting factor on the orderly growth of urban and metropolitan areas. It may be that the rising interest in and apparent tendency towards democratic decentralization is a contributory factor and hopeful recognition of the role of people in government at all levels.

Since Independence, municipal government system has undergone varied reforms and changes in its structure, finance and other related matters in various States, in response to several suggestions and recommendations made by enquiry commissions, committees and experts

at the Central as well as State levels[1]. The Parliament of India and State Legislatures have enacted new laws and amended the existing ones considerably in order to enable the municipal government to perform its tasks more efficiently and effectively.

Inspired by parliamentary democracy and Constitution of India it is being suggested to introduce cabinet system in municipal government for the sake of collective responsibility and public accountability. The idea of cabinet system in municipal government is in its infancy and needs to be examined in greater details! An attempt has been made in this paper to deal with some of the aspects having a bearing on the working of city power structure, the municipal council, the mayor, the committee system and the municipal chief executives or the commissioner vis-a-vis cabinet system.

The advocates of cabinet system may have certain objectives in common: to revitalize the city power structure; to ensure quick

---

(1) India, Report of the Local Finance Enquiry Committee, 1951 in India, Report of the Taxation Enquiry Commission, 1953. Report of the Seminar on Improving City Government, organized by the Indian Institute of Public Administration, New Delhi, 1958. Punjab, Report of Local Government (Urban) Enquiry Committee, 1957. Madhya Pradesh, Report of the Urban Local Self-Government Committee, 1959. Rajasthan, An Enquiry Committee on Local Finance, 1959, Rajasthan, The Administrative Reforms Committee, 1963. Gujarat. The Committee on Rationalization of Functions of Municipalities, 1962. West Bengal, the Municipal Corporation of Calcutta Enquiry Committee, 1962. Madhya Pradesh, A Commission on Service Conditions of Municipal Employees, 1963, India, Augmentation of Financial Resources of Local Bodies of the Committee of Local Self Government Ministers, Ministry of Health and Family Planning, New Delhi, 1963. India, Report of the Rural-Urban Relationship Committee, Ministry of Health and Family Planning, New Delhi, 1966.

and smooth decision-making and public accountability and to formulate policies and implement programmes for the benefit of the community as a whole rather than for any party, group or vested interest. Each of these objectives are reflected or embodied in the fundamental principles of parliamentary democracy. It may be anticipated that adoption of the cabinet system will bring about improvements in the civic leadership of the municipal government in two ways. First, it will broaden the scope and functioning of municipal politics. Second, it may enhance the status and prestige of the municipal council and inspire some of the energetic and enthusiastic councillors to be willing to serve, on the 'municipal cabinet'.

Generally speaking, the cabinet system approach is prematurely prescriptive and that unfortunately no systematic research has been made in the merits and demerits of this approach and the reaction of various forces from within and without the municipal government system.

II. Municipal Institutions and Rural-Urban Relationship Committee

The contemporary municipal government system is a dramatic example of a separation of powers and functions and a complex and enormous network of activity is separated into several institutions and carried on by different agencies and departments. The municipal institutions establish rights and duties on the one hand and develop a basis for performance and regulation on the other. These institutions which differ widely in degree and scope from city to city and from State to State, have been studied by enquiry commissioners or committees and the experts. The views of the Rural-Urban Relationship Committee

reflect the latest thinking on the role and implications of these institutions and will influence a great deal the future course of developments in Indian municipal government system.

The Rural-Urban Relationship Committee dealt with the most significant institutios of municipal government system and made recommendations about the role and functions of some of the institutions which are by implication concerned with the subject-matter of this paper. It is, therefore, appropriate to examine their findings and suggestions, as given below:(1)

"The demand for converting municipal councils into corporations has been increasing, particularly in regard to State Capitals as the institution of Corporation carries a larger degree of prestige, power and autonomy. The Committee are of the opinion that the conversion of Municipal Councils into Corporations should be related to the capacity of the town to undertake higher responsibilities and have, therefore, recommended elsewhere that the status of Corporation should be conferred only on cities which have a population of not less than 5 lakhs and an annual income of Rs. 1 crore or more.

"The constituent units of the Corporation are the Mayor, the Council, Standing and Functional Committees and the Municipal Commissioner. In some Corporations, there are also Circle/Zonal Committees. The Mayor is the head of the Corporation and the Council

---

(1) India, Report of Rural-Urban Relationship Committee, Ministry of Health and Family Planning, 1966. Vol. I. pp. 54-72.

is the policy making body. It also issues directions and sanctions major works and projects. The Committees work under powers delegated to them either by law or by resolutions of the Council. The Municipal Commissioner is the Chief Executive who controls the staff and looks after the day to-day administration of the Corporation. The Circle/ Zonal Committees are generally found in big metropolitan areas and have been delegated certain executive powers exercisable within the areas of their jurisdiction.

"The Municipal Council is the most popular form of local government in the urban areas. Acts governing Municipal Councils have undergone several amendments but Councils in different States continue to have almost the same type of organization. The Council has a Chairman who is the executive head. The State Government exercises greater control over the Municipal Councils through the District Officer and the Divisional Commissioner than over the Corporations.

"The Committee are aware that any reduction in the size of the existing Corporation Councils, however desirable, would cause resentment and, therefore, hesitate to recommend it.

The Committee, however, favour medium size councils which may not be too unweildy and at the same time give sufficient representation. In future, no new Corporation should be set up with more than 50 councillors nor should there be any increase in the size of the existing Councils.

"The Presiding Officer of the Municipal Corporation is known as the 'Mayor' and of Municipal Councils as the 'Chairman' or 'President'. The Mayor does not have executive powers but the Chairman of Municipal

Council exercises executive authority in his own right. The Committee are of the opinion that it is not possible for Municipal Councils, especially the smaller and medium sized ones, to effect the separation of deliberative and executive functions, as in the case of Corporations and recommend that the existing practice of the Chairman of the Municipal Council exercising executive power should continue. However, in bigger Municipal Councils having a population of two lakhs or more, thee separation of policy making from the executive functions should be progressively achieved. The Committee are firmly of the view that every Municipal Council should have a full time paid Executive Officer.

"Every Corporation and Municipal Council shall set up a Coordination and Finance Committee consisting of the Mayor and the Deputy Mayor in the case of Corporations and the of the Chairman and the Vice-Chairman in the case of Municipal Councils, Chairmen of four Functional Committees to be nominated by the Council and two members to be elected by the Council by single transferable vote. This Committee shall prepare budget estimates, supervise all financial matters and coordinate the activities of different Municipal departments. The term of the Committee shall be one year.

"The law should provide that every Corporation and bigger municipality (population one lakh or more) shall compulsorily set-up the following committees to be called functional committees:- 1. Planning and Development; 2. Housing and Works including land development; 3. Health and Sanitation; and (4) Education.

"The law shall provide that every Corporation and Municipal Council may and when the State Government so directs shall establish

one or more functional committees to deal with such subjects as: 1. Roads and communications; 2. Electricity and water works; 3. Transport; 4. Milk supply; 5. Sewerage and sewage disposal; and 6. Recreation facilities, etc.

"The Chief Executive is the focal institution in the local government's set up. Being the apex of the administrative hierarchial pyramid, the Chief Executive must carry with him the responsibility for the implementation of policies formulated by the popular representatives. The Chief Executive exercises supervisory and disciplinary control over the departmental heads and the subordinate staff and coordinates their activities to maintain efficiency. His office should, therefore, be vested with adequate powers and prestige. As the municipal problems become more complicated, more varied, more technical and more interrelated, they require expert handling. The Chief Executive must, therefore, be an experienced official. If he is required to produce results, he must be free from interference in the discharge of his duties and be protected against factional politics. At the same time he must owe complete loyalty to the deliberate body and implement its decisions faithfully.

"The Committee gave considerable thought to the question of vesting the Mayor with greater executive powers but found that such a course will give rise to various difficulties. As the Chief Executive authority, the Mayor must necessarily be made removable by a vote of no-confidence which would be derogatory to the dignity and position of the Mayor. If the Mayor was to handle the executive functions he is likely to be subjected to intense party and political pressures which

again would lower his prestige. Moreover, the city administration is today and full-time job requiring expertise and experience. The Committee, therefore, do not favour any substantial increase in the powers of the Mayor".

The Committee System

In accordance with the existing practices, most of the work of the municipal council is carried on by committees - standing committees and special or select committees. The number of these committees differs from city to city and state to state, according to statutes. Despite certain obvious advantages of dealing with civic issues in a thorough and positive manner, the committee system has been criticized for causing delays, indecisiveness and laxity in municipal affairs. In 1948, the Bombay Local Self-Government Committee made the following observations in the working of Committees in the municipal government:-

"Local self-government Acts provide the appointment of several committees with executive powers. This provision is fully availed of and a number of Committees are appointed and executive responsibility is divided among them. The practice generally is to find room for a number of members as one or more committees regardless of the qualifications, fitness, or aptitude of the persons for the work of these committees. Chairmanships of these bodies are often offered to persons who are inconvenient just to placate them. Worse still, the posts frequently serve as powers in the game of party politics. We find that

much of the laxity in ad inistration can be traced to this practice of dividing executive responsibility among several committees. Existence of numerous executive committees does not permit of any coordination and is mainly responsible for delay in the disposal of business. Much time of the staff is wasted in attending to the work of these bodies. In the circumstances, we recommend that all executive work should be concentrated in one committee which should be styled the "Standing Committee" in all the Acts".

These findings and recommendations have been discussed at some length because they are vital in understanding the municipal institutions and are also implicit in the political reforms and administrative improvements. The Rural-Urban Relationship Committee have neither suggested for the creation of any new institution nor for the abolition of the existing ones: the Committee have of course strongly advocated for maintaining the dignity and prestige of the mayor, for revitalizing the functioning of the committee system and for enhancing the effectiveness of the municipal chief executive. The municipal government system, which evolves in a country is, to great extent determined by the political and socio-economic development of the country. The municipal institutions which will be considerably influenced by the future events in the national development will always differ from State to State and their powers and functions will be extended or contracted at will by the State Legislatures.

Report of the Local Self-Government Committee, Bombay. 1939. Printed at the Government Central Press, Bombay, 1948, p. 62.

III. City Power Structure and Policy Making

In the complex processes of urban and metropolitan growth in which we are progressively entering, policy making differs greatly in scope and procedure from traditional methods which are in vogue for the past many decades. In India where we had 788.36 lakhs (1961 Census), people in cities and towns as against 1128.85 lakhs (1960 Census) in the metropolitan areas of U.S.A., it is unfortunate that we have not adequately adjusted and appreciated the need for new approaches and procedures in dealing with the problems of cities and towns. We are carrying on with considerable degree of ambiguity and vagueness by following traditional approaches and by using outdated terms and phrases that are misleading in the contemporary context. For example, it may be argued that city/municipal council is not the sole body taking major decisions and its task is essentially to authorize and coordinate rather than to chalk out a policy. Most of the decisions are made by a variety of official as well as non-official agencies within and outside of the municipal town hall. As students of city urban government, we are mainly interested to know where does the power lie and to identify the role being played by the municipal council in its exercise.

In any city, the structure of power has an important bearing on varied policies being formulated for tackling civic issues. The city power structure is characterized by variety of people, their interests, occupations and activities with profound implications for civic and political life. A comprehensive discussion of city power structure is obviously out of question. It may be, however, be useful

to refer to the observations of some of experts on the subject matter. In Governing New York City (New York, 1960), Wallace Sayre and Herbert Kaufman observe:-

"No single elite dominates the political and governmental system of New York City... Most individual decisions are shaped by a small percentage of the city's population - indeed, by a small percentage of those who engage actively in politics ..... the city government is most accurately visualized as a series of semi-autonomous little worlds each of which brings forth programs and policies through the interactions of its own inhabitants..... New York's huge and diverse system of government and politics is a loose knit and multi-centered network in which decisions are reached by ceaseless bargaining and fluctuating alliances among the major categories of participants in each center, and in which the centers are partially but strikingly isolated from one another".

Edward Banefield describes the power structure of Chicago in the following words:(1)

"Chicago is too big a city, and the interests in it far too diverse to allow of quick and easy agreement on anything. By approaching an issue slowly, the political head gives opposing interests time to emerge to formulate their positions and to present their arguments... According to the Chicago view, a policy ought to be framed by the interests affected..... The political head should see that all principally affected interests are represented, that residual interests

---

1. Edward Banefield, "Political Influence", New York, 1961. p. 270-71. See also, Big City Politics". Harward University, U.S.A. 1965.

In a well known study Decisions in Syracuse, Frank Munger states as follows:-

"Only three overall conclusions seem warranted by the materials examined. First, the myth that significant decisions in Syracuse emanate from one source does not stand up under close scrutiny. Second, there tend to be as many decision centers as there are important decision areas, which means that the decision-making power is fragmented among the institutions, agencies and individuals which cluster about these areas. Third, in reality, there appear to be many kinds of community power with one differing from another in so many fundamental ways as to make virtually impossible a meaningful comparison."

James McKee, a reputed sociologist, after studying a steel manufacturing city, analyzed the power structure thus -

"First, there is no single locus of decision-making, but rather a number of loci, each differently structured.... Second, a number of groups may have varying effects upon decision-making in any given locus ..... Hence, the pyramidal model of the social order with power and authority located at the apex, is inaccurate and misleading. Third, the organization of political power in the community provides a striking and contradictory contrast to the system of power and authority within the cooperation.... In the community, decision-making is more democratically structured. This is not to assert that what goes on

---

2. Roscoe C. Martin (editor), "Decisions on Syracuse", Doubledey & Co. New York, 1965, pp. 322-232.

in the community fully epitomizes democracy. But it is to assert that a share in decision-making in the community is now more easily attained by citizens of low status".

According to Dahl, "The mayor was not at the peak of a pyramid but at the center of intersecting circles. He rarely commanded. He negotiated, cajoled, exhorted, beguiled, charmed, pressed, appealed, reasoned, promised, insisted, demanded, even threatened; but he most needed support and acquiescence from other leaders who simply could not be commanded. Because he could not command, he had to bargain".

Under the existing conditions, we may feel that urban problems exist within the incorporated areas of a municipal government and what happens therein is almost entirely within its control. It never, or seldom passes our comprehension to think in terms of these urban problems being part of a much bigger phenomena which has a wide variety of facts and forces at work with it and which exhibits varied favourable and adverse influences for each and every unit of municipal government within the metropolis or region. As reformists, we may be excited to suggest a number of organizational and administrative reforms such as introduction of cabinet system for more responsible and efficient municipal government.

---

1. Quoted in Politics in the Metropolis, edited by Thomas R. Dye and Brett W. Hawkins, Published by Charles E. Merril Books, Columbus, Ohio (U.S.A.), 1967 pp. 359.

Robert A. Dahl, "Who Governs - Democracy and Power in an American City", Yale University Press, New Haven, U.S.A., 1961.

As realists, we may be disappointed to experience lack of response and enthusiasm from within and without, to several policies and programmes of a city government. Within the city, we all well aware of the several interest groups and influences such as chambers of commerce and trade, industrial organizations, press, radio and other media of communication, labour unions and professional associations, religious and social welfare institutions. Outside the city limits, there are ad hoc authorities, notified or town area committee, cantonment boards, railway colonies, urban panchayats and several un-incorporated areas, with overlapping jurisdictions and multiple functions.

IV. Municipal Chief Executive and Decision Making

The challenging task of the municipal chief executive is to turn change in the environment - in urban society, urban economy and technology - into administrative and organizational opportunity. He must convert socio-economic needs and demands into effective political and administrative policies and programmes. The first and foremost question to which a discussion of the municipal chief executive has to address is, therefore, what needs and aspirations are identifiable in the environment of the emerging urban society. The government - Central, State and local - is expanding its powers and services day by day and in every way such as law and order, education, health, social welfare and other services. Inevitably, more and more of our socio-economic life will find itself under the governmental control and the municipal chief executive will be increasingly called upon to solve the rising problems of cities and towns and their people. In solving these problems, the municipal

chief executive may indeed curve out a new role for himself, or, more accurately, extend his traditional role in response to the new needs and challenges of the times.

Decision-making has assumed great significance in government, business and other activities, in a world of uncertainty and complexity. At any and all levels of government and in administrative agencies and departments, decision making involves such questions as: what is required to be done and when and where; to what goals will be existing resources be channelled; how much of the national income will be allocated for each level of government for performance of their duties. These questions are heavily based on the distribution of decision-making power, the availability and soundness of the information system upon which decisions are arrived; and ultimately, the competence and integrity of the decision-makers themselves.

Modern management science techniques such as operations research, PERT, systems analysis, computer technology, quantitative decision making theory, etc. are progressively gaining importance in private as well as public sectors. With the passage of time, these management science techniques are demonstrating their usefulness and effectiveness so that those who are applying them in their organization or administrative agency have an edge over their counterparts and competitors. Despite limitations of several techniques, the government at all levels, and various administrative agencies can enhance their performance and increase their efficiency by applying these techniques. With a view to help make administrative as well as business decisions in the most efficient manner, these modern techniques provide the administrators and executives with

more reliable methods or systems for arriving at accurate and definite decisions. Thus, all levels of government - Central, State and local - must take a long range of the future and apply these techniques in answering a variety of questions such as the following:

1. Enhancing the tax base and preparing sound and systematic budgets;

2. Eliminating disparities and conflicts between the central areas and suburbs;

3. Seeking transfer of resources from the superior levels of government;

4. Ensuring implementation of programmes and enlisting public participation;

5. Removing duplication and overlapping in official and non-official agencies within the urban/metropolitan region.

The relationship between the municipal chief executive and the elected representatives in municipal government system is always somewhat embarrasing. The municipal chief executive is asked to keep his attention focussed on fact to avert them from party politics, vested interests and immediate political pressures. The elected representatives must somehow deal with, compromise and accommodate just these considerations and pressures and carry on thus from the point of view of his political responsibility. It is, therefore, essential to work out various techniques to enable each group to relate itself to the others. The hope of parliamentary democracy depends upon the proposition that men of integrity and profound commonsense will in fact be elected to discharge political responsibility and accountability.

The demands of the modern technology and welfare state call for very high personal qualities and administrative skills on the part of the

municipal chief executive. Modern management and administrative techniques expect of the municipal chief executive "to be well informed on technological developments, farsighted in planning for the future, through in their knowledge of organization. Flexible in accepting changes and creative in applying new methods to municipal operations. These characteristics are essential if the city officials of today are to be prepared to meet the tremendous management challenges of tomorrow".(1)

V. New Strategy

Time has come for a free and frank analysis of the scope and role of the municipal government, municipal council, mayor, the chief executive, the committees, the councillors in order to enable proper appreciation of the new realities on our civic and political life. Such an analysis will have practical and administrative implications and should be done in a dispassionate and objective manner. Although, some studies have been made in the past, we somehow have not undertaken a national debate of the fundamental issues of municipal government. We should, however, be wrong in complacently assuming that all is basically well and we can carry on our municipal affairs in the traditionally routine manner. At time, some stray reforms or suggestions such as cabinet system are sought to be made without any firm grasp of the essentials of the problems.

The city is in ferment. Every citizen in a city or town has accelerated through constant propagation of the meaning and implications of parliamentary democracy and democratic socialism. We are bound to face

---

Howell, Edwin S. Challenges of automation for cities. Public Management (Chicago) V 39-7, July, 1957. p. 147-50.

problems if these needs and expectations are not fulfilled especially for vast number of poor people who are caught in a vicious circle of poverty and hardship.

It is, therefore, of critical importance to generate a greater sense of urgency and keener realization of the need to formulate policies and implement programmes which are designed to tackle the urban/city problems on areawide/metropolitan basis on the one hand and to build the economic and social infrastructure of the country, on the other.

It is not an easy task to arrive at exactly the right strategy for the proper and efficient functioning of municipal governments, spread over in the country, with diversified socio-economic and political characteristics. The traditional and outdated systems must be examined and a more appropriate and effective solutions evolved for the rising complicated problems of our cities and towns and the two main factors to be considered in this examination should be that the cities must be recognized as metropolitan areas having cut-across the incorporated boundaries and that the executive and administrative agencies must be streamlined on modern lines for proper accountability and efficient performance. Thus, a number of doubts arise about the existing system of our municipal governments established under different laws in different states. Is this system really effective - politically and administratively? Are we getting good value and efficient services for the money being spent on it?

The role of the municipal government as a whole is increasing alongwith a corresponding growth in the size and area of cities and towns

and their significance in the economic development of the country.

While dealing with the existing structure and administrative processes of municipal government in our cities and towns we are destined to confront with the rapidly emerging metropolitan areas and some kind of metropolitan government. The municipal governments are wasting a good deal of their meagre resources due to overlapping and duplication of varied civic functions and services and due to the absence of metropolitan, political and administrative institutions.

In a parliamentary democracy, as in our country, it is but natural to seek answers to all complicated questions in parliamentary institutions, for example, the cabinet system. In any attempt to determine just how much power and authority, the cabinet should possess and how it should exercise in practice, the greatest difficulty arises over the relations of the cabinet with the rest of the executive and with varied official and non-official agencies enjoying vast powers in the society at large. In the city/urban government, any such cabinet system must define the degree and kind of control, the cabinet should exercise over the chief executive officer, heads of departments and the municipal employees at large; the statutory and ad hoc authorities, labour and employees Unions, and the numerous chambers and associations in a growing urban complex. The position of any such cabinet cannot be easily described in the light of the experiences obtained from Central as well as State Governments, in the Indian political system.

Today, the Cabinet is still formally in the same supreme position. The decisions of the government are not said to be those of the Prime Minister or of the departmental ministers, Acts are not

labelled with the names of politicians or civil servants or even held to be simply the work of Parliament; in theory they all emanate from the Cabinet". Established in this way as a regular and recognized feature, the development of the Cabinet was governed by its relatives with Parliament on the one side and the King on the other".[1] (p. 60)

"It is, of course, impossible to stop at any point in time and select an occasion or an institution and denounce that this is The Cabinet". (p. 42-43).

"..... but no government or Cabinet could operate now-a-days without the sifting process and preparatory work done by such Committees". (p. 438).[1]

The cabinet system in municipal government will be something of an innovation as and when it is initiated. Such an innovation may throw up a new set of problems and create the need for strong party system with their manifestos, departmental layout, well-disciplined bureaucracy etc. However, the basic problem is an archaic and outdated administrative system which is a major hinderance in the way of any innovation or improvement since it is based on checks and balances designed to ensure uniformity and conformity. Other administrative and organizational problems include rigid state control, inadequate delegation of administrative and financial powers, insufficient recurring and non-recurring grants in-aid, frequent transfers of key personnel, and lack of adequate incentives and facilities to the municipal employees.

---

(1) John P. Mackintosh, "The British Cabinet", Stevens and Sons Limited, London, 1962.

In measuring the usefulness and effectiveness of the cabinet system, many factors such as quality of civic leadership, the integrity and morale of the municipal employees, the trends of public opinion and the nature of State Government policy, have all to be examined carefully. The questions of 'inner cabinet' and 'shadow cabinet' may arise in due course. The role of the mayor vis-a-vis cabinet system will have to be redefined. Will the Mayor swim and sink alongwith the cabinet? Some decisions may be taken by the Mayor alone, some in consultation between him and the cabinet while others may be left to the chief executive and heads of departments, the cabinet, cabinet committees or ad hoc authorities. The exact amount of power exercised by each political as well as administrative agency and the use made of the cabinet depends upon the personality and disposition of the mayor and the personnel and the problem with which he has to deal. In short, each and every mayor may be inclined to carry on the established pattern but will certainly leave an imprint of his stature on the municipal government they lead.

We have to find answers to the varied perplexing questions within the next few years and it is becoming increasingly obvious that a re-examination of the role and the tools of the municipal government is warranted. We must redefine the goals of municipal government and reorient its methods and procedures which will allow these goals to be realized in the not too distant future in an efficient and equitable manner. These complex problems can no longer be ignored and it is apparent that neither the Central nor the State government can solve these alone. It is not suggested to eliminate politics from the legitimate scope of municipal government but the importance of administrative and technical aspects

cannot be denied.

The government - horizontally and vertically - must be able to recognize and direct change in order to survive. In a developing society, the rate of change of environment - both socially, economically and technologically, is increasing by rapid strides, we must find more efficient and newer ways to identify and cope with the change.

In the universities and research institutes, the number of research workers engaged upon the study of urban government and problems is appreciably small in the face of the issues to be resolved. Much more research needs to be done in the optimum scale of area and population, concentration rather than deconcentration, consolidation rather than sub-division of urban government; enhancing the respect and prestige of municipal employment.

THE CENTRE FOR TRAINING AND RESEARCH IN MUNICIPAL ADMINISTRATION

Seminar on

'Cabinet System in Municipal Government'
September 15-16, 1969

Cabinet System of Municipal Government

by

C.B. Rao
Ex-Mayor of Allahabad

Indian Institute of Public Administration
NEW DELHI.

Cabinet System of Municipal Government

The concept of a cabinet system of government is modern, but municipal bodies, is one form or another, existed even in ancient times. The word municipal is itself Roman in origin. Leaving aside the Greek city-states, which were complete political entities in themselves and therefore not comparable to a Roman municipium or a modern city, some form of local administrative authority existed even in the ancient world which may be considered as the ancestor of the municipal corporation of today. To take but one example, there was the Town Council of the ancient Indian metropolis of Pataliputra, as described by Megasthenes.

According to him the Town Council of Pataliputra consisted of six separate divisions, each with five members, and these six divisions looked after six different spheres of municipal responsibility. One had to take care of the local handicrafts, another of foreigners residing in the city, a third had to keep birth and death records correct and up to date, a fourth supervised markets, checking of weights and measures was the responsibility of the fifth division of the Town Council and the rixth was in charge of trade and commerce. Nor was this all. While the six different divisions of the Town Council severally looked after the six subjects mentioned above, the whole body was jointly responsible for some of the basic civic needs such as maintenance of public health, spread of education, upkeep of places of public worship and entertainment, superintendence of public parks and tanks and

wells etc. The Town Council was also expected to keep a check over the prices of consumer goods!

The Town Council of Pataliputra, therefore, may justly be called a precursor of the Municipal Corporation of modern Patna, though the line of succession from the one to the other is by no means an unbroken one. All the same, since the ancient Pataliputra was no more a city-state than is modern Patna, the sphere of authority and responsibility was as clearly defined in respect of the Town Council of which Megasthenes wrote as it is in respect of the municipal corporation of today. The maintenance of law and order was even then, as it is now, the responsibility of the state rather than that of the city. The Nagaraka of ancient Pataliputra discharged the functions and shouldered the responsibilities distributed today between the City Magistrate and the City Kotwal. Like them, too, the Nagaraka was subordinate to and took his orders from the ruler or his representative, not the Town Council.

It is obvious, therefore, that though individual cities have been recognised as important enough units of administration to need a separate authority for themselves, they have always been treated as lesser administrative entities than the state and, therefore, requiring no more than a certain measure of authority in certain specific fields. Not only that, since the cities are not smaller than the parent states but wholly within them, the local authority looking after the needs of cities has to be kept securely encased within the bigger structure of the state government. A municipal government in other words, is a government within a government. Whatever

the degree of independent decision and action they may enjoy, municipal governments, in all states and at all times, have been subordinate to their legal parents, the governments of the states within which they have existed. I do not propose to discuss why it should be so, i.e. why municipal governments should be under the control of state governments, because it is obvious that, no matter how much freedom a local administrative authority may be permitted, and in how many spheres, the ultimate supremacy of the state government must needs be guaranteed if the state is to preserve its integrity. We must be clear, therefore, that when we use the word 'government' in respect of a municipal administration we are not using it in exactly, or fully, the sense in which we would use it when speaking of a national or state government. A local administration would remain a local administration whether it be a democratic municipal administration of today or the autocratic rule of a medieval satrap given control of a town. The satrap would still be subordinate to his sovereign.

The subordination of the municipal authority to the state government may sometimes be actually more irksome and constricting than would seem at first sight. There are countries, for instance, where the municipal authority is free to do anything it wants to, provided that it is not expressly forbidden by law. But this seeming independence is in fact rather less valuable than the limited rope allowed to municipal bodies in countries where they are not permitted to do anything beyond what they are expressly asked to do. In the former case though municipal bodies may be supposed to be free to

devise any plan or course of action for the good of the urban community in their charge, their actions are sometimes so rigidly controlled by higher authorities that they may be in fact able to do nothing, while in the latter variety of municipal councils it often happens that though they are allowed to function only within certain well-defined limits, they are left free within those limits. They are thus enabled to enjoy a much greater amount of liberty of action than if they had been permitted to run where they liked but their legs had been securely tied beforehand. If the elected deliberative wing of a municipal corporation, to give another example, were free to discuss and decide what they liked with but the executive were subordinate not to them but to an extraneous higher authority, the freedom given to the deliberative wing would be utterly meaningless. In diverse ways, therefore, the subordination of the local municipal government to the state government is seen and felt in the regular discharge of civic responsibilities. When we examine the feasibility and worthwhileness of a cabinet system of municipal government we must constantly bear in mind this fact.

A cabinet system of government must, of course, be based on a system of election on political party lines. For unless a municipal council is elected on that basis there can emerge no majority group the leader of which could be asked to form a cabinet. Of course municipal, as any other, elections could be fought out between groups formed otherwise than on the basis of political affiliations, but since local governments must needs work in the closest collaboration (or conflict)?

with the state governments, and since state governments are and must needs continue to be, formed on political party lines, it is simplest and most natural that municipal elections should also be conducted on the same lines. It is inevitable that groups will be formed, both in the course and at the conclusion of elections. People do not fight elections alone, nor do they conduct themselves in legislatures and municipal councils as so many unattached individuals. To win an election they must get together and form some kind of a union or team, and after winning an election they must again form some sort of a working group if they want to achieve something, to get something done or prevent something from being done. Alliances are, thus, essential. And it is at once more natural, more convenient and, in the long run, more workable to form permanent alliances than ad hoc ones. A permanent majority in a body like a municipal council is obviously a valuable asset.

That being so, what could be more natural or more meaningful than a municipal group formed on the basis of political affiliations? Such a group wou ld start with many advantages, the biggest of which would be its ability to endure. Much can be, and has been, said for as well as against the conduct of municipal affairs on political party lines, but if it is conceded that they must needs be conducted on some kind of party lines in any case, that there is no escape from group- or team-formation whatever we may try to do, then it would seem idle to discuss the matter at all. For if candidates and their supporters, and elected members once the votes are counted and results declared, will in any case

form groups of some sort or other, is it not infinitely better as well as more realistic that they should form them along political party lines than otherwise? To mention but one obvious advantage, if elected members of municipal councils grouped themselves along political party lines they would at least avoid the temptation of forming groups on the basis of caste and community. In the India of today that is a danger not lightly to be disregarded.

We may assume, even if only because otherwise a discussion of a cabinet system in municipal government would be meaningless, that municipal elections will continue to be fought on party lines. We would then get over the first hurdle to the formation of a local, municipal cabinet; as in the case of a state legislature, the local or regional representative of the Governor could send for the leader of the largest political group in the freshly elected municipal council and ask him whether he is prepared to form a stable government. He must ask that, for if it were made impossible under the law for a municipal government to be thrown out of office, it would not be a responsible government at all. Therefore what w e must postulate is a municipal constitution under which the accredited leader of a well-defined majority group of elected councillors is prepared to undertake the responsibility of forming a municipal government that will be able to stay in office in the face of opposition attempts to throw it out by outvoting it on some important enough issue. The leader of the majority group will, in other words, correspond to a Chief Minister in a state government. If he is also the Mayor,

i.e. if the Mayor is the head of the municipal government, obviously another person must be elected as chairman of the municipal council - and that chairman would be nothing but a chairman, he would exercise no executive authority outside the forum. Either condition is possible, for the appellation mayor may be used either for the executive head of the municipal administration or the presiding officer of the deliberative forum.

Let us assume, then, that a municipal election has taken place and a well-defined group has emerged as the majority group in the elected house and its acknowledged leader has been invited to form a government and has accepted the invitation. What does he do next? Obviously he looks around and selects as many of the most suitable and useful persons as he needs, from within his group, to constitute the municipal cabinet. We now come up against the really important questions that would need to be examined. First, what manner of men would this leader of the majority group have to choose his team from?

What are the various motives which attract people to seek membership of a municipal council? Very few could be attracted by a profit motive - in the restricted sense of monetary profit - because the chances of making a lot of money through one's membership of a municipality are neither numerous nor too bright. Moreover it seems cynical to assume that most citizens are basically not only selfish but also dishonest. Some way, indeed some must, be motivated by the lure of financial gain, but their number cannot be large. Similarly the number

of genuinely public-spirited men, who want to become members of a municipal body because they are eager to do good, must also be small. If it would be cynical to assume that most men are fundamentally dishonest, it would certainly be too idealistic to believe that our cities are crowded with Good Samaritans. Ordinarily the best of the elected members are there because they have been impelled by the belief that membership of the municipal council will bring them not only added prestige but also increased local influence and some power to use that influence for their friends' and fellow citizens' good. The majority of members probably are motivated principally by a desire to improve their local image, some with a view to future advantage, others for lesser but more immediate gains. Except in very large cities where their number may be considerable, it is hardly likely that a municipal council will have enough men of adequate ability as well as local prestige to make good municipal cabinet ministers.

Another point to be considered is the time that these men would be able to give to municipal work. Unless adequately compensated very few would be able to take on whole-time jobs, and few municipal bodies would be in a position adequately to compensate a sufficient number of men who are truly good enough. And those that tried to so compensate them must guard against making their administrative structure far too top heavy to sustain. Again, will there be enough work to keep elected municipal cabinet ministers occupied for more than part of the time each day? Not unless the elected municipal cabinet ministers were to replace the higher ranking

paid offic ials. But if the higher ranking paid officials were to be replaced by elected men, the consequences may be disast rous because there would be an immediate and very considerable loss of efficiency since the elected men would bring little experience and no technical knowledge to the jobs. Moreover, being but birds of passage, they would also lack the incentive to learn what they did not know. The higher ranking supervisory staff must needs be there for the work to be carried on with reasonable efficiency. Actually even the municipal commissioner, or by whatever name the principal executive officer s designated, would be difficult to replace with an elected member or minister because a municipal cabinet will also need an o fficer corresponding to the Chief Secretary in a State government's sec retariat. The municipal commissioner will automatically slide into the position of a Chief Secretary in a municipal secretariat.

It is not only that there will not be sufficient men of sufficient ability and local prestige to adequately fill the position of municipal cabinet ministers, the work and responsibility involved would also not justify the creation of a sufficient number of such posts to make a sizeable municipal cabinet. We must, therefore, devise some other method by which we may gain the advantages of a cabinet system of government for our cities without placing unbearable strains on their financial resources. For there are certain advantages which can only be secured through the adoption, in an adapted form, of what is known as the cabinet system of government.

The municipal council having come into being, on the basis of elections fought on party lines, and the Mayor having been elected by the entire body of elected members and aldermen, the person chosen as Mayor should be authorised to nominate not only his own Deputy Mayor but also the entire Executive Committee and such other statutory committees as there may be. He will probably confine his choice to his own partymen as far as possible, but there should be no bar to his chosing others. No matters whom he selects, the team he choses will be his 'cabinet' and will function as a team under his captaincy - even as a team of cabinet ministers functions under the leadership of a Chief Minister.

This kind of municipal government will correspond, more or less, to a cabinet government, and have the advantage of cohesive and collaborative planning and execution. The opposition - for it is obvious that under such a system an apposition is bound to emerge - will keep this municipal cabinet on its toes, providing a healthy threat to its existence if it went too far off the rails. It will be possible then to build up a system of organised and responsible contact between the local political groups within municipal bodies and their larger units in the state and central legislatures. The former could then be more meaningfully called the nurseries or training grounds for the latter.

The biggest advantage of this kind of adaptation of the cabinet system of government for municipal purposes would be that it would make the elected wing at once more effective and more responsible than it can be in the absence of a strong

enough incentive to function as a body of disciplined groups. We shall then not have the ridiculous exhibition of an executive committee elected according to the system of proportional representation speak and even vote against the budget they themselves are supposed to present to the house.

A minimum of a three-year term of office would be necessary for such a municipal cabinet to be able effectively to plan and execute measures of public good. If the title of Mayor be considered unsuitable for the head of such a cabinet, since he too would require a three-year term, like the cabinet he heads, the Mayor may hold office for a year and only preside over meetings of the corporation and perform other formal and ceremonial functions and the head of the cabinet may be called Chief Executive Councillor. The designation is not important, what is important is that the head of the team of elected members who will form a municipal cabinet - consisting of the Deputy Mayor, if there be one, and all members of all statutory committees - should himself nominate his entire team, to ensure cohesion, collaboration and continuity.

'Amravati'
15, Tagore Nagar
Allahabad.

C.B. Rao

THE CENTRE FOR TRAINING AND RESEARCH IN MUNICIPAL ADMINISTRATION

Seminar on

'Cabinet System in Municipal Government'

September 14-15, 1969

Cabinet System in Municipal Government

- A View point

by

Chetkar Jha
Patna University

The Indian Institute of Public Administration
New Delhi.

CABINET SYSTEM IN MUNICIPAL GOVERNMENT
A VIEW POINT

by

Chetkar Jha
Patna University

The form of government is always a product of political decision which in turn is shaped and determined by the nature and content of politics obtaining in the society at the time of such decisions.

Since the government is also an instrument of social change, its form is also designed to act as a corrective as well as a promoter. It is sought to be used to weaken those elements in the politics which are considered, in the opinion of those charged with the responsibility of taking decision regarding the form of government, undesirable and to strengthen those elements which are considered worthwhile and desirable. Yet what will be acceptable to the politics, that is, what will be workable in the prevailing political situation has to enter into the calculation of the designers of the form of a government. Any discussion, therefore, on any form or suggested form of government,, be it for a country or a region or a locality demands analysis and appraisal of the prevailing politics in which the particular government is going to function.

Indian politics in general has been operating within a communal framework. Localism in the sense of narrow outlook and loyalties which characterises Indian politics in general reflects itself most at the local level, since local politics is so close to the earth and the people. A direct consequence of it is what may be described as 'disintegrated politics.'

Stable politics based on the existence of stable political groups is exception rather than a rule in the sphere of local and State governments.

The malady of municipal politics lies in its communal and disintegrated nature. Members of political parties who sit on local councils receive no guidance from their parties in the form of party politics even where they function with their party lebels. In many cases they sit as independents while retaining links with their parties outside indirectly. Whatever the situation local councils miss the advantage that ought to flow from the presence of organised political groups in a normal situation. Local councils, instead have all the disadvantages of disorganised politics. Disorganised politics injects narrow caste and parochial considerations into municipal administration in the name of practical politics.

The working of some State governments has shown that the cabinet form of government has not enabled us to contain and control the undesirable elements in our politics. The passion, the bitterness, the narrowness and the unruliness that have characterised the politics of some States during the past three years show that the functioning of the cabinet form of government since 1946 has had certainly something to do with the strengthening of the forces that threaten to devour the cabinet form of government itself.

The factional nature of politics has already turned our political parties into coalitions of factions based on narrow loyalties. The relations between the factions within

a party range from one extreme of infatuation to the other extreme of measureless hatred that ever corroded a human breast. Besides, relations between two factions keep changing from time to time. As a result uncertainty reigns supreme.

Due to the presence of factions, uncertain relations between the factions, mutual suspicion, the element of homogeneity, unity of outlook and approach and sense of solidarity are so terribly undermined that the position of the leader of the so-called majority group even is in some cases one of the weakest among the important ministers. The less said is better about the plight of the chief ministers of the coalition governments. The impact of such a situation on administration has been disastrous, indeed.

The two important functions of the cabinet - (a) effecting coordination, and (b) overseeing administration, which are the principal concern of the chief of the cabinet have been sadly neglected.

Grouping and assignment of portfolios have generally been done on personal and narrow political considerations. The leaders of important factions have demanded the placing of departments (considered important by them) and they have generally been accommodated at the cost of efficiency.

Considerations of personal merits and qualifications have become irrelevant since narrow loyalties based on caste or religion or region or language play the dominant role in contemporary politics of several States. In short, work as such has become irrelevant.

Mr.Neville Maxwell, the distinguished Correspondent of the Times, London, summed up his assessment of the situation in Bihar in the latter half of 1966 in the following words:

..."that the present system of government is not only unserviceable...(in that it does not produce government) but also actively toxic to the society...in that it exacerbates and accentuates the manifold divisions within it."[1]

In the field of local self-government the cabinet form had been introduced in village panchayats in Bihar in pursuance of the Bihar Panchayat Raj Act, 1947. It provided for the selection of the members of the executive committee of the Panchayat by the Mukhiya (The Chief of the Panchayat) who was to be elected by the entire adult population which constituted the legislative organ of the Panchayat. The system had to be modified after watching its operation for nearly ten years. Even the existing system in which the Mukhiya selects four members, i.e. half of the total number of the members of the executive committee is hardly satisfactory. In a manner of speaking one may say that people in Bihar have to choose either the Mukhiya or the Panchayat. They cannot have both.

In the light of our experience of the working of the cabinet form of government in some States, as well as in Panchayats we may be justified in rejecting the proposal for introducing the cabinet form of government in Municipal Corporations and Municipalities.

---

1. A letter dated December 7,1966 addressed to the author of this paper.

The issue may be examined from another angle as well. A local council is not the local counterpart of a State or national legislative body. It is infact, the counterpart of the council of Ministers at the local level. This basic nature of a local council is clearly brought out by the very detailed legislations which have been enacted by State legislatures to prescribe their constitutions, functions and duties. These laws do not only lay down the functions and duties of local authorities in very great details but prescribe in great detail the manner in which particular functions have to be performed. That is, local councils are concerned with what may be described matters related to minor administrative policies. It is, therefore, not possible to draw a line of a demarcation between the functions of the local council and its council of ministers. If, however, it is done it means taking away so much of power of the local council and throwing it into the lap of one individual.

The concentration of authority in one individual at the cost of the council is bound to cause heart-burning and opposition from those left out. The scramble for capturing the position of leadership which has done considerable damage to the Panchayat movement in Bihar and to the politics and governance of several States will not leave the municipal cabinet untouched.

An observer of the political scene today cannot help feeling that the desire to have a share in power is so strong in every person who enters a political institution that any form of government which is not designed to cater to

this need of members in a reasonable manner would not be workable. There is the need for a form of government that would make it possible for every member to have some share while at the same time creating conditions in which members will learn the lessons of working together in pursuit of the common goal of providing at least the minimum of municipal amenities required for clean and decent living.

THE CENTRE FOR TRAINING AND RESEARCH
IN MUNICIPAL ADMINISTRATION

Seminar on

'Cabinet System in Municipal Government'

(September 15 & 16, 1969)

Management Problems in Municipal Government and the Relevance of the Cabinet System

- A Working Paper

by

Mohit Bhattacharya

The Indian Institute of Public Administration
New Delhi.

Management Problems in Municipal Government and the Relevance of the Cabinet System

The foundations of urban local self-government in India were laid in the last century and the structure of municipal government that was designed in those olden days has remained almost unchanged todate. In bigger cities, the corporation type of city government after the Bombay model with its tripartite division of powers persists; in other towns the familiar council-committee system of the British type has generally prevailed. The southern States have, however, adopted in recent times the Madras model of municipal structure with powers distributed among the council, the chairman and the chief executive officer. This model has also been introduced recently in a few other States such as Madhya Pradesh, Bihar and Orissa. Thus, the fragmented structure of municipal government which is characteristic of corporation government seems to have gained in popularity after Independence. The current trend toward the provincialisation of municipal services, which is intended to strengthen the executive administration of municipalities, tends to reinforce further the fragmented structure of municipal government.

Under the Bombay model of corporation government, powers are distributed among three coordinate statutory authorities, e.g., the corporation or the council, the commissioner appointed by the State Government, and one or more standing committees. The number of authorities increases further where separate utilities such as electricity, transportation, water supply and sewerage are sought to be administered with a degree

of autonomy within the overall frame of city government. Thus, there are seven authorities under the Delhi Municipal Corporation Act, 1957, and an identical number under the Bombay Municipal Corporation Act, 1888. As mentioned earlier, in a number of States the constitution of ordinary municipalities has also been framed or changed after the corporation model. In consequence, the traditional British-type council-committee system is now existent in only seven States such as Assam, West Bengal, Uttar Pradesh, Punjab, Rajasthan, Gujarat and Maharashtra.

The Council-Committee System

The council-committee system is based on the nineteenth century idea of direct responsibility of every councillor for the administration of a local area. In an era of limited municipal functions and paucity of paid staff, it was necessary that each councillor should do his bit to run the municipal machinery. The committee system was, therefore, intended to give every popular representative some share in local administration. However, it is common knowledge that in India the committee system in the municipalities could not develop in the same way as it did in Britain. Very few functions were entrusted to the municipal bodies, and chronic financial difficulties stood in the way of diversification of functions. Another impediment to the widespread acceptance of committee system was a general reluctance on the part of the group in power to delegate authority to anybody else. In Britain, where committee system developed fully, it has been observed recently

by a Committee[1] that the device has contributed neither to efficiency in decision-making nor to economy in administration. It tends to divide municipal administration into separate isolated compartments, each consisting of one or more departments and the committee supervising their activities. In such circumstances, coordination becomes difficult, if not impossible, and there is hardly any mechanism for viewing and guiding the municipal administration as a whole. The idea of the councillors' direct responsibility for administration inherent in the committee system works against delegation of powers to paid officials, and encourages unnecessary and even undesirable interference in day-to-day administration.

In India, the council-committee system did not work well due to the failure of the committee system to strike firm roots. So far as ordinary municipalities are concerned, the president/chairman with the help of a majority of councillors emerged as the head of both the council and the executive administration. The general picture has been one of ill-staffed municipal administration headed by a chairman who has at best been a part-time amateur administrator. Even where an ex-ecutive officer has been appointed to strengthen executive administration, the relationship between him and the members of the elected wing has not always been easy and helpful. The municipal council has in many cases been reluctant to delegate powers to the executive officer to enable him to run the day-to-day administration without much

1. Report of the Committee on the Management of Local Government, Vol.1, HM SO, London, 1967, pp.35-6.

of political interference. In such circumstances, no working distinction could be evolved between what should be done by the elected councillors and what should be left to the care of paid officials. It has resulted in the under-utilisation of the services of the paid staff and a diffused administration having no distinct focus of responsibility.

The Corporation Triumvirate

The internal management problems of the municipal corporations flow from the statutory fragmentation of authority which is a characteristic feature of all the Acts governing the organisation and working of municipal corporations in India. As the ordinary municipalities in the southern States exhibit a closely similar fragmented structure, the observations with regard to corporation administration will hold good in their case also. The distinctive feature of corporation government is what is commonly called the separation of executive and deliberative functions. The corporation or the city council is to lay down broad policies, frame bye-laws, sanction the budget and keep a general watch on executive administration. At the other end, the entire executive authority is vested in the commissioner appointed by the State government (Central Government in the case of the Municipal Corporation of Delhi). The commissioner is as much an independent statutory authority as the corporation, deriving powers directly from the law. He has important powers of making appointments and contracts, enforcing the provisions of the Act for which he has been made statutorily responsible, implementing the decisions made by the corporation and the

standing committees, and exercising control and supervision over the entire executive administration. In most cases, the corporation Acts have provided for a number of statutory functional committees which has the effect of splintering the administration further and rendering coordination difficult.

The structure of corporation government is designed on a dubious assumption that in governmental operations 'policy' and 'administration' are two distinct and divisible functions which can be entrusted to two separate authorities. It is not very easy to define the terms, and in the practical world of governance, especially in the field of local government, policy and administration are inextricably intertwined. Historically, the doctrine of separation of powers was formulated by Montesquieu to weaken governmental authority in an age of autocracy. With the advent of democracy, much of its appeal was lost, as other methods of keeping the executive in check evolved. In the context of Indian municipal government, it should be borne in mind that the independent coordinate authority of the commissioner dates back to a stage in the constitutional evolution of the country when rep resentative municipal government was struggling to be born and official dominance was universal. Corporation government originated in the Presidency towns where the then ruling class had a vital stake in their administration and they could hardly afford to entrust executive authority even to a partially elected council. With the inauguration of constitutional democracy after Independence, the retention of the government-appointed commissioner as a coordinate and independent statutory

municipal authority has hardly any justification. When a civil servant is placed as a coordinate statutory municipal authority, it involves an unwarranted trespass into the domain of the representative local council. If he is defended as a check on the popular element, the argument would betray a queer distrust of representative government itself. As the history of corporation government in India shows, the statutory division of deliberative and executive powers has been a constant source of friction between the commissioner and the corporation. The commissioner's attempts to run the executive administration without political interference have frequently been thwarted by pressures from the elective wing. On the other hand, the elected city fathers have argued, not without justification, that since they are often blamed for the deficiencies and failures in civic administration, the statutory responsibility for executive administration must be theirs. Thus, a debilitating conflict of authority has been built into the constitution of corporation government. In practice the commissioner and the corporation must work in harmony as necessary complements to each other, but the law has driven a wedge between the two.

Fragmentation of authority poses serious problems of administrative coordination. In corporation government the locus of authority is indeterminate which stands in the way of smooth internal management and progressive city planning and development. For instance, the commissioner may be responsible for executive administration, but in most cases he does

not have ultimate authority over staff matters. Similarly, for making appointments and contracts, powers are distributed among several authorities which not infrequently leads to the slowing down of the pace of administration. Due to fragmented structure and splintering of authority, the needs of the city as a whole, its perspective planning for progressive development, and single-minded attention to mobilisation of resources and enlisting of active popular support for civic development projects seem to be nobody's concern. A commissioner may be a very efficient administrator, but he cannot be expected to play the role of a political leader. While the councillors would aver that they are partly, and not wholly, responsible for the city's governance, as executive administration has been statutorily taken out of their control. The standing committee, as provided for in the Corporation Acts of Bombay, Delhi and Hyderabad, has tried to assume the role of a coordinating mechanism - the focal point of city administration, which is intended to gather up the diverse threads of administration and give it a unity of purpose. As a microcosm of the corporation, it knows the mind of the elected wing; and being a small body, it works in a more business-like manner and takes decisions in a calmer atmosphere unruffled by the din and fury of corporation sessions. Although the commissioner is not legally subordinate to the standing committee in practice he finds it convenient to work in close association with the committee. The standing committee has the potentialities of a plural political executive acting as a bridge between the corporation and the executive administration headed

by the commissioner. But the implied conception of non-partisan municipal government has stood in the way of its emerging much like a cabinet system which is in vogue at Central and State levels. The corporation Acts invariably provide for partial election of the members of the standing committee every year on the idea that its membership is non-permanent. Again, some Acts provide for proportional representation which goes against the concept of political homogeneity so vital for a cabinet system. The placement of the commissioner as a coordinate, and not subordinate, authority also creates an anomalous relationship between the standing committee and the chief executive, the commissioner.

Reform Proposals

Although it has been felt that the existing forms of municipal government in India have not met with much success, it is rather surprising that very few reform proposals have been mooted and seriously pursued to change the 19th century municipal structure. After Independence, a short-lived experiment was made in Uttar Pradesh and Madhya Bharat with the presidential system of municipal government, the president being directly elected by the people. In recent days, the corporation form of government has been under fire and the corporators have time and again inveighed against the statutory independence of the commissioner and pointed out the unworkability and undesirability in a democracy of the statutory separation of deliberative and executive powers. It is in this connection that the introduction of the cabinet system of government at the municipal level has been favoured by the

mayors and corporators of important corporations such as Bombay, Calcutta, Delhi, Poona, Nagpur, Sholapur and a few others.[2] As a concrete measure, the Metropolitan Council of Delhi had passed a Bill (No.59 of 1966) proposing a Mayor-in-Council form of municipal government for Delhi in replacement of the present Municipal Corporation. The Bill was forwarded to the Parliament for enactment, but due to the general elections intervening the measure could not be passed. It was explained in the 'Statement of Objects and Reasons' that the Bill contemplated important changes in the organisational set-up of the Municipal Corporation of Delhi to enable that body to function more efficiently. "Under the Delhi Municipal Corporation Act, 1957, the executive power for the purpose of carrying out the provisions of the Act vests in the Commissioner but in a number of cases, he can act only with the previous sanction or approval of the Standing Committee or the Corporation. The scheme embodied in the Bill provides for the executive functions being vested in the Mayor-in-Council consisting of the Mayor who will be elected by the members of the Corporation and two Deputy Mayors who will be appointed by the Administrator (of the Union Territory of Delhi) on the advice of the Mayor. The Commissioner will be the principal executive officer of the Corporation and will exercise the powers and perform the duties conferred or imposed on him under the Act subject to the supervision and control of the Mayor-in-Council."[3] The

---

2. See the Report of the Rural-Urban Relationship Committee, Vol.III, Ministry of Health and Family Planning, Government of India, 1966, pp.496-506.

3. See Bill No.59 of 1966 as published in the Gazette of India Extraordinary, Part II-Section 2, New Delhi, August 29,1966.

form of municipal government envisaged in the Bill comes close to the cabinet system of government. The Mayor and the two Deputy Mayors constituting the Mayor-in-Council will be responsible for the executive administration of the Corporation; at the same time, they will be members of the Corporation. The Mayor will be removable by a resolution passed by a majority of all the members of the Corporation. Thus, the fusion of executive and legislative wings which is the fundamental characteristic of cabinet system of government is achieved, and the accountability of the Mayor-in-Council to the Corporation ensured. The Commissioner, under the proposed system, will be appointed by the Mayor-in-Council with the approval of the Administrator, and he will function subject to the supervision and control of the Mayor-in-Council. This provision obviously aims at abrogating the old duality in Corporation administration. Also, the existing fragmentation of authority has been sought to be removed by abolishing the Standing Committee and making the constitution of committees optional. As the first serious attempt after Independence to radically change the constitution of city government, the Mayor-in-Council Bill is no doubt a landmark in the history of municipal government in India.

Search for a Modus Vivendi

On a closer scrutiny, the form of municipal government proposed for Delhi exhibits a number of glaring defects. For instance, a three-man council is too small to supervise and control the various functional departments. Also, a small cabinet is apt to antagonise influential party leaders many

of whom would aspire after a position in the cabinet. Since only the Mayor is removable by the Corporation, the principle of joint responsibility has been overlooked in the proposed system. Under the projected set-up, no distinction has been made between a titular executive and a real executive. In such circumstances, the Mayor will have to function both as an ornamental figurehead and as the head of the executive organ, which would put too much strain on the busy Mayor. The Mayor or in his absence the Senior Deputy Mayor will be presiding over the meetings of the Corporation. This provision creates an anomalous situation; for, the Mayor who is head of the Mayor-in-Council - the political executive, should not simultaneously hold the position of speakership of the Corporation. A separate provision needs to be made for the election of a President and a vice-president of the Corporation from among the corporators who will preside over every meeting of the Corporation. Another important defect, which may pose a threat to the successful working of the Mayor-in-Council, is that the opposition will have almost no real share in the exercise of governmental power. Committees, if constituted, will be advisory in nature. On the lines of the Public Accounts Committee and the Estimates Committee at higher levels of government, statutory Accounts and Estimates Committees elected on the basis of proportional representation would have ensured a positive role of the opposition in keeping a watch on the working of municipal administration.

In spite of these defects, the proposed Mayor-in-Council system of government may well form a basis for starting a

meaningful discussion on reforms in municipal structure. The cabinet form of government is certainly not the only type of government that can be introduced at the municipal level. But, it has certain distinct advantages. In the first place, the cabinet system establishes a plural executive as distinguished from the singular executive in a strong-mayor or presidential system of government. It has, therefore, more room for accommodating at least the important political leaders and offering them a share in the exercise of power. In the second place, a harmonious integration of the executive and the legislative wings is achieved through this system which thus steers clear of any possible deadlock between the two under a presidential system of government. Because of the not-too-pleasant history of concentration of executive authority in the municipal commissioner, politically any attempt to install a presidential system of municipal government may run into rough weather. Lastly, the cabinet system has the great merit of being easily understandable, as it has been in operation for a fairly long time at the State and Central levels.

So far as the municipal corporations and bigger municipalities are concerned there is not much difficulty in introducing the cabinet system of government in them. The councils in these cases are fairly large and political parties have in fact gravitated toward them. This may not hold good in the case of smaller municipalities having not-too-large councils. Even then, it is possible in such instances to conceive of a small but plural political executive consisting

of the municipal president and two or three deputies who would guide, direct and control the executive administration and, at the same time, communicate with the elected council to which they will be accountable for their actions.

Conclusion

There are various types of municipal government in operation in different parts of the world, and it is easy to be tempted by one type or the other and urge for its adoption. One must not forget, however, that governmental forms are not just mechanical constructs; they grow out of distinct socio-political situations. Again, there are certain core values in a society which are sought to be preserved and promoted through a particular structure of government. Political institutions last or languish according as they succeed or fail in keeping in step with the dominant societal needs and norms. In India, the crisis in municipal government has its origin in the deliberate non-acceptance of the fundamental core value of Indian polity, namely, democracy. Translated in local terms, municipal democracy means that the municipal government of an urban area is essentially the responsibility of a group of locally elected popular representatives. Such a concept of local democracy does not allow of an interposition of any other competitive authority and it is a fundamental postulate of a democratic form of government that the non-political permanent executive must be subordinated to the political executive. Municipal government in India, especially, the corporation form of government, has been working under the

illusion that a system of government can endure even by neglecting the core value of a political society. Time is not far, however, when this illusion will be shattered by the surging realities.

SEMINAR ON CABINET SYSTEM OF MUNICIPAL GOVERNMENT

A CASE FOR CABINET FORM OF MUNICIPAL EXECUTIVE

By

Prof. M. A. Muttalib,
Head, Dept. of Public Administration,
Osmania University.

CENTRE FOR TRAINING AND RESEARCH IN MUNICIPAL ADMINISTRATION

INDIAN INSTITUTE OF PUBLIC ADMINISTRATION,
NEW DELHI-1

A CASE FOR CABINET FORM OF MUNICIPAL EXECUTIVE

Although chronologically municipal bodies have been the first to have received democratic order in the whole political fabric of the country, the municipal executive is still an unsettled issue. The issue is no longer academic with the phenomenal changes in area and population of the modern city and consequently the growing volume and complexity of civic problems. It assumes great importance in the absence of a managing body being entrusted with the function of directing and controlling civic activities and yet being responsible to the council in whom is vested the ultimate responsibility for the administration of the municipal body. There is no executive organ of government in the legal sense of the term. It is the generality of councillors 'who are involved in the process of deciding what should be done, how it should be done, and checking whether it has been done' by virtue of their chairmanship and membership of the council and of various Committees. Since the transfer of Local Government along with a few other subjects to the Provincial Governments under the Government of India Act, 1919, the municipal executive has assumed a variety of forms. A significant trend discernible in this respect is that the two main categories of municipal bodies namely, city corporations and district municipalities have witnessed two diverging tendencies in this respect. Following the Bombay pattern of bifurcation of the executive from deliberative functions almost every city corporation has adopted what is popularly called the Commissioner type or Corporation type of City Government. The city corporation consists of three co-ordinate authorities viz. the Corporation itself, the Standing Committee (or Standing Committees) and the Commissioner. They are hierarchally graded, with the Corporation at the top. Having received well-defined statutory position and functions, they tend to function independent of one another. While the Corporation is

invested with several executive powers of managerial character. It exercises supervision and control of municipal administration through the Committees and the Commissioner. If the Committees occupy a twilight zone between the deliberative and executive wings of the City Government, the Commissioner is primarily to function as the Chief Executive Officer and thus solely charged with the execution aspects of the city corporation.

The city corporations however, differ in respect of the role of

a) the Mayor and/or the Deputy Mayor and

b) the Committees.

By and large, the Mayor who occupies the position of the first citizen in all cities performs ceremonial functions only by representing the city on ceremonial occasions and by presiding over the sessions of the Council. Certain city corporations like that of Bangalore has taken care statutorily to keep him above party politics by disallowing him to be the Chairman of any of the Standing Committees. However, the city corporations in Uttar Pradesh and of Madras sharply contrast in this regard. In Uttar Pradesh certain categories of municipal appointments are made by him in consultation with the State Public Service Commission, while the Deputy Mayor acts as the Chairman of the principal Committee, viz., the Executive Committee and of the Development Committee in his ex-officio capacity. In Madras the Mayor is a channel of communication between the corporation and outside agencies on the one hand, and occupies special position in relation to important Committees like the Central Committee, Contract Committee and Appointment Committees on the other. He is accorded the position of ex-officio membership (along with his deputy) and chairmanship of the first and the latter two Committees respectively.

The Committee system provides the other basis for differentiation betwee n city corporations. Largely, there are three

Committee. In Calcutta and Banglore Committees are both functional with statutory basis. The service Committees like those of the Finance and Personnel perform functions coordinative in nature in their respective spheres; otherwise, no Committee is invested with any coordinating or integrating role. Madras Corporation to a large extent, has two types of Committees, zonal and functional. The whole city is divided into two Districts. Each District is subdivided into five Circles. Each Circle has a Circle Committee constituted for each of the ten Divisions consisting of ten councillors. Each Circle Committee has a Circle Officer consisting of the Circle Health Officer, the Circle Engineer and other staff. Then at the apex all the Central Committees along with Functional Committees, viz., the Contract Committee, Appointments Committee and Accounts Committee. The Central Committee is organically connected with the circle Committees with a representive from each of them. It coordinates their activities. The other Corporations fall under the third category where Functional Committees are the creation of the Council whereas the principal Committee is the Statutory Committee. In Hyderabad, Bombay and Delhi, there is the Standing Committee. In Bombay and Delhi in addition to the Standing Committee there are more than one Statutory Committee concerned with road transport, water supply, electricity, etc. Likewise, while the Executive Committee is the principal Committee, there is the Development Committee which is also a Statutory Committee like the Executive Committee.

While the Commissioner type or Corporation type of City Government is the normal pattern of city corporations, no single nomenclature may be given to the variety of forms of executive is in operation in municipalities in different States. In Madras alone, the executive in municipalities comes closer to that prevalent in the Corporations. Practically in all other States the principle of separation of the executive from deliberative

Commissioner type of City Government is non-existence in the municipalities, although there is an Executive Officer was is to assist the Chairman of the Municipality in the discharge of execrtive functions. The Chairman is not a gubernatorial functionery like the Mayor in the city corporation. He is the head of both deliberative and executive wings and wields considerable powers over the Executive Off-icer. He presides over the meetings of the Council and guides its deliberations. He presides over the Committees and practically provides a co-ordinating links on one hand, between Committees and on the other, between Committees and the Council. In his executive capacity, he exercises control over the executive personnel and the financial and administrative matters. Generally it is the Chairman who acts as a channel of communication between the municipality and the outside agencies including the State Government.

There exists a degree of hetrogeneity in respect of executive powers exercised by the Chairman. Perhaps the strongest Chairman of a Municipality is to be found in Orissa where the Chairman (President) exercises the powers of appointing and disciplining the staff. In the State of Uttar Pradesh, Jammu and Kashmir and Andhra Pradesh and Rajasthan, the power of appointing staff is shared between the Chairman and the Executive Officer. In Gujarat he exercises power of appeal against the orders of the Executive Officer, punishing members of the staff. Much of the mal-administration in municipalities is attributed to the weak position of the Executive Officer. The extreme position may be found in Andhra Pradesh where the Executive Officer (the Municipal Secretary) is practically reduced to the position of a glorified clerk. Theoretically the staff is subordinate to him, but in practice, the principle of the unity of command is the main casuality.

Maharashtra, an integrated system is in operation. They seem to have derived inspiration from its counterpart in Zilla Parishad. There is a Standing Committee presided over by the Chairman of the Municipality, with its Vice-Chairman as Vice Chairman, Chairmen of Subject Committees and a few elected councillors as members of the Standing Committee. The Council, the Standing Committee and the Subject Committees operate on the basis of graded hierarchy. But the Andhra Pradesh Municipalities Act, 1965, has dispensed with the Committee system. It stipulates the Executive Committee as the only Committee and one of the four municipal authorities with broad based statutory foundation.

The city corporations and the district municipalities may largely be distinguished in respect of the dual aspects of municipal executive, namely, political and administrative leadership. The most distinctive characteristic feature of city corporations is that the Commissioner who is drawn from the highest echelon of the public service in the State, viz., the I.A.S. is expected to provide effective administrative leadership to the municipal staff. No similar nature of leadership can be expected from the Executive Officer in a district municipality, with the Chairman of Municipality exercising executive authority.

So far as the political leadership is concerned it is of dispersed character both in city corporations and in the municipalities, although the Chairman tends to have an edge over other municipal authorities. If the municipalities suffer from lack of effective administrative and political direction, the city corporations' serious draw-back stems from ineffective political leadership which has adversely affected the efficacy of the institution of Municipal Commissioner, intended to ensure integrated, efficient and de-politicised municipal administration. In the presence of a large council and a multiplicity of Committees with plural character operating as uncoordinated centres and semi-centres of decision-making, the Commissioner is required to function in a situation not known to the City

The sitation is super charged by political and sociological factors. In the absence of well-organised party system, the Committees suffer from ideological drive, coherence, and consistency. There has been a decline in civic bodies attracting persons of calibre, consequent to inadequate scope for service to the people resulting from rigid state control. Further, the social climate of a pluralist Society in general, and urban community in particular, seems to be another inhibiting factor. Thus parties have not articulated effectively the pluralism of interests and opinions. The bonds of kinship, religion, caste etc., are strong. A person in position is despised as lacking in human feelings if he does not acknowledge it as his duty to see that his needy friends and relatives are not given a share in the "spoils". The proximity of the councillors to the soil and the difficulty in subjecting them to any code of conduct or discipline, tend to make them susceptible to ill practices. If the present arrangement of ineffective political leadership has generated functional contradictions, the Commissioner's tendency is to be rigid and adhere strictly to his rule-minded approach. This generally results in dead lock and inertia in administration. Before any alternative arrangement is thought of it is desirable to examine the existing arrangement, as to whether it may be developed into a form that may provide effective political direction in the council and to the administration on the one hand, and provide full operational freedom to the officials on the other. In some cities the need for a managing body seems to have been perceived or has been explicitly stated. One may note some developments in this respect. The prominence of the principal Committee in the city corporations may be attributed to statutory position and/or service functions like those of finance and personnel. The Standing Committee in the cities of Bombay, Delhi and Hyderabad, the Executive Committee in

emerged even more clearly as something like a Cabinet but for certain inhibiting factors, i.e., selection of its members on the basis of proportional representation, the annual election of its Chairman and members, the executive role of the Subject Committees and the accessibility of the Commissioner to the Council. The first tends to place a premium on minority representation making the Standing Committee difficult to acquire a homogenous character distinctive of a Cabinet form of executive. The second weakens the position of its Chairman and members in relation to the administrative wing and particularly to the Commissioner who out-stays them. The third factor, viz., the executive role of the Subject Committees in their respective spheres results in the fragmentation of policy decisions and dispersal of responsibility. Finally, the accessibility of the Commissioner is likely to undermine the role of the Standing Committee in affording effective political leadership. This is because of the statutory position of the Commissioner and his right to ask for inclusion of any item for discussion by the Council. At times, when there has been difference of opinions between the Commissioner and the Committees, their decisions have been referred to the Council for ratification. Any explanation by him in this regard, will amount to his appealing to the Council over the heads of the Committees.

In the municipalities the executive authority is referred to earlier, shared by a number of municipal authorities causing not only fragmentation of decisions but also conflict of power between them. In addition to the Council, the committees, the Executive Officer and the Chairman also share executive power. The work is generally fragmented between them, although sometimes the chairman by force of his personality, or the principal Committee by virtue of its financial authority may find himself/itself in the position of a coordinator.

In the Maharashtra Municipalities however, the Standing Committee is so designed to function as the 'local Cabinet' for

all practical purposes. Functionally it serves a channel of communications between the Subject Committees and the parent body. Further, it is organically connected with all the Subject Committees, in view of the provision that their Chairmen will be the members ex-officio of the Standing Committee.

The Standing Committee of the Maharashtra Municipalities is closer to the Cabinet form of executive than its counterpart in the City Corporations. But the Standing Committee of the Maharashtra Municipalities is prevented from assuming the role of a true 'Municipal Cabinet' for a variety of reasons: First, the plural character of the Subject Committees will militate against the maintenance of a close and helpful administrative relationship to the Standing Committee as the chief executive. Secondly, with a heterogenous group of persons at the helm, the delicate relationship that exists between the political and permanent executives, would be subjected to great strain. Thirdly, each Committee with a member of the Standing Committee in chair, and with final decision-making powers, and constituting a bridge between the Standing Committee and the Departments will develop itself as a self-contained, self-sufficient and self-important authority undermining the importance of the Standing Committee as the chief executive. Finally, the fibre of parties and consequently of the executive would be greatly weakened with the interposition of Committees combining the characteristics of Specialized Standing Committees and Executive Committees.

So far as the Executive Committee of the Andhra Pradesh Municipalities is concerned, it is more like the Municipal Cabinet than the Standing Committees of the city corporations and of the Maharashtra Municipalities. For the Executive Committee, not merely derives its status and authority directly from the Act like its counterparts in the Maharashtra Municipalities and the City Corporations. It is more powerful than them. Thus it is to exercise the executive powers for the purpose of carrying out

It is charged with the carrying into effect the resolutions of the Councils in several matters. It is to furnish to the Council such periodical reports regarding the progress made in carrying out the resolutions of the Council.

Like the Standing Committees, the Executive Committee, however, suffers from serious limitations preventing it from emerging a 'real' Municipal Cabinet. Thus election of the members of the Executive Committee in accordance with the system of the proportional representation by means of single transferable vote denies it homogenous character. Moreover, the Council is not competent to 'destroy its own creature, viz., the Executive Committee without the support of 2/3 of its strength and the approval of the Government. On the other hand, the Government can dissolve the Executive Committee if in its opinion it is not competent to perform or persistently makes default in performing the duties imposed on it by law or exceeds or abuses its position or powers.

A few changes of far-reaching effect should be contemplated if the Standing Committee or the Executive Committee which contains the germ of a true 'Policy Committee' is to function in an effective manner like a Cabinet acting as the sole spokesman of the Council and as the tool of administrative control. This entails the incorporation of the essence of Cabinet form of Government. First, there should be a single Executive Committee of the Council and all others should be merely advisory Committees. Secondly, the leader of the majority party in the Council who would be its Chairman should nominate its members. Thirdly, the chairmanship of the Council and of the proposed Executive Committee should not be combined in the same hands as is the case now in municipalities. One should not be the Chairman of the other; otherwise, it amounts to calling upon the Speaker to act as the Prime Minister. Fourthly, the Committee should be collectively responsible to the Council

Finally, the Committee and not the Chief Executive Officer should be answerable to the Council for civic administration, while the Chief Executive Officer should be under the overall supervision of the Committee.

More or less on the above similar lines, reforms in local government are being contemplated in U.K., the home of local government by Committees. Thus the Maud Committee on Management of Local Government has made recommendations for the creation of the Management Board of Councillors charged with over-all supervision and direction of local administration. The Committees will cease to have any concern with details of day-to-day administration. They would be generally deliberative and advisory bodies. However, if the recommendation of the Maud Committee that the Management Board should be composed of members of both the majority and minority parties, is accepted the Board will reduce to an organ of registration of the decisions of the majority party concerns. The real decisions would have been taken at private meetings of the party without the benefit of the advice from officers. Further, the argument of the Maud Committee that if a plural Board will provide a share in the responsibilities of the authority and it can assume full responsibility when called upon, is not tenable. For a divided government can hardly provide coherent and consistent leadership to administration, unless non-partisan lines. Likewise, the members of the proposed Executive Committee should be available on full-time basis and will have a title for payment of salary like their counterparts at State and national levels.

For a variety of reasons an undiluted Cabinet form of municipal executive may be favoured for the metropolitan and medium sized cities.

1) There should be identical forms of government at all xx

higher levels. Our municipal bodies have tried almost all conceivable forms of executive except the Cabinet form. It is the pattern of executive at national and state levels and we have been familiar with it for about 50 years - ever since Dyarchy was introduced under the Government of India Act 1919.

(2) Introduction of Cabinet form of executive at local level will help improve the working of its counterpart at State level. Thus it will remedy the situation causing floor-crossing in the State legislature. The State politicians indulge in frequently changing their political loyalties with impunity. If Cabinet form of executive is extended to the local level, because of their proximity and relatively smaller constituencies, the turn-coats will be subjected to greater exposure and thus the disease could be properly diagnosed by their voters. Although this may amount to the transfer of the head-ache to the local bodies, the disease will not only have limited effect but also it can be effectively remedied.

3) Beyond the loaves and fishes there is the pursuit of power in the interest of service to the people that attracts some of the best talents and minds. Both the elements - power and service - lack in the existing forms of Municipal Government. Therefore, the power and prestige attached to Cabinet form of executive and the scope for service to the people will attract talented people. The local council which is generally a talking shop without being effective in decision-making, can have purposeful discussion with the qualitative improvement in political leadership.*

---

* One may contend that 'Strong Mayor' type may also provide effective leadership. This proposition is unacceptable. For, besides the fact that it did not work well in Madhya Pradesh and Madras (when strong President form and Chairman Plan were introduced respectively), it will not suitably provide a training ground for state and national governments in the absence of identical forms of executive at the local and upper levels.

4) With the improvement of the quality of the political leadership, the administration can expect protection against the excesses of local democracy. Thus with the local ministers occupying the treasury benches the system will develop a shock-absorber in the political executive for the administration in relation to the Council, conceding the former full operational freedom and thereby will make local Government more attractive to potential officers.

_____oOo_____

THE CENTRE FOR TRAINING AND RESEARCH IN MUNICIPAL ADMINISTRATION

Seminar on

'Cabinet System in Municipal Government'
September 15-16, 1969

Cabinet System in Municipal Administration

by

R.B. Das
Professor & Head of Department
Institute of Public Administration
Lucknow University

The Indian Institute of Public Administration
NEW DELHI-1.

INTRODUCTION

The management of local government as distinct from the reorganisation of local authorities is today presenting many complex problems all over the world. The factors leading to this situation are commonly known. Important among these are the rapid urbanisation; the rising standards of living and civic conscious citizens. The existing municipal services are proving inadequate. The resources of local authorities and administrative efficiency are not capable of meeting these growing requirements. The structure of municipal government is, it is said, also not appropriate enough to cope with the new problems. There is a general feeling that the system is wanting in leadership which is so necessary for speed and efficiency. This is perhaps the reason that everywhere, in advanced as well as underdeveloped or developing countries, attention is now being given to strengthen the municipal administration. In U.S.A. experiments were made from time to time resulting in various forms of municipal governments, eventually recognizing a definite place for the political executive supported by expert knowledge made available through one of the principal officers. Nevertheless some kind of separation between the Council and a professional Chief Executive has also been considered. In U.K. the Royal Commission on "The Management of Local Government" has given its report, which is awaiting finalisation by the Government. In India, the Rural-Urban Relationship Committee has dealt with the issue and has suggested some radical reforms in municipal administration.

In this context the issue, to the confrontation of all, is whether the municipal system as it exists today, can survive the challenge of technological, social and economic developments and whether a new reorientation has to be given to relative precedence over the deliberative and executive wing in the new context. There is sufficient divergence of opinion on the issue. There are those who stand for minimum control by the elected representative and a political ex ecutive. On the other hand there are those who advocate the strengthening of these positions. It is under these circumstances that the idea of a cabinet system is being mooted. It would be, therefore, in the fitness of things that this issue is fully examined so that one may understand the implication of the introduction of this form.

In view of the significance of the foregoing issues the discussion should be in the light of historical perspective. Not only is the form of organisation important to meet the challenges projected by the nature of new services, it is also important that changes are made in consonance with traditions of the people and the use of particular forms of administrative devices.

The municipal administration in India developed as a result of the exigencies and requirements of the British rule. Originally municipal committees were established to share some of the Exchequer expenses and were under the complete control of the officials, District Magistrate at the apex as Chairman. But the Committees gained importance and strength in the course as consciousness for self-government among the

people became more pronounced. Lord Rippon's Resolution of 1882, introduced the elected element to replace the nominated members and the control of district officials was also relaxed to some extent. The Resolution of 1918 was passed to further democratise the municipal government, the Montague-Chelmsford Reforms of 1919 gave a large measure of autonomy to provincial legislatures and the responsibility for local government was placed under a popular Minister. Official domination was, thus, eliminated. After the passing of the Government of India Act, 1919 the executive authority in municipal boards was vested in the elected Chairman, who was assisted by a whole-time officer viz. executive officer. The pattern thus evolved exists even today as far as municipal boards are concerned.

The situation in Presidency Towns, however, digressed a little even earlier. The Bombay Municipal Corporation Act 1888, made provision for direct election of half of the members and one-quarter for indirect election of the Councillor. It also provided for a municipal commissioner and a 'Standing Committee' of the Council to undertake the major portion of the work of the Council. The Bombay pattern became the guide-line for other Corporations constituted later in the country, particularly after independence.

Thus, on the one hand there is a greater desire on the part of the elected representative to be of some consequence in the management of services entrusted to local authorities and on the other there is a keenness on the part of officers to maintain a certain level of efficiency and freedom from the popular wing for discharge of their normal duties. The former

advocate a full share of responsibility entrusted to them both in the field of policy-making as well as in regard to administrative control over the execution of these policies. However, there are others who while granting due share of the responsibility for policy-making to the popular wing are not in favour of entrusting the execution entirely to it. They favour an independent executive to avoid baneful effects of politics in the administrative sphere. They, therefore, see no harm in the current relationship between the deliberative and executive wings. As such the dichotomy now created between these wings requires a thorough examination. The issue of the cabinet system is related.

One has, therefore, to examine the basic features of the cabinet government and their applicability to municipal administration. The idea of the cabinet government, in fact, is basically not opposed to a system of committees which is an essential characteristic of municipal government currently in vogue.

Major considerations in favour of committee system are to maintain the hold of the deliberative body over the entire administrative apparatus. One might mention here that in England the committee system came into being to supplement the working of the councils. Committees were so devised as to create specialised agencies for detailed deliberations on different sets of problems and they came to occupy an important position in due course. The committees also took advantage of services of permanent staff both in regard to formulation of policies and their execution. For coordination purposes in certain towns

general purpose committees were also created. The Committee system as suc h o ver a period of time acquired a prominent position in municipal administration. Simultaneously it developed certain short-comings, particularly in respect of the execution of policies where individual members tended to take part in actual administration. Lord Redcliff-Maud, who is perhaps among a few authorities of the World on the subject took his clue from the working of a general purposes committee when he embarked on an idea of a management board for municipal government. On the line of a general purposes committee a board of management exists in Scandinavian countries and Germany and works as a collegiate executive earmarking spheres of activities for different members. Unfortunately this coordinating committee has been mistaken for a cabinet system which is not its exact parallel.

The difference between Committee System and Cabinet System is that the latter deprives the great majority of the members from taking part in the administration and the executive power is vested in a few hands. The municipal administration functions by associating elected representatives with the municipal government. They are by far the most important element of it. Sir Andrew Wheatley has observed in his dissenting note to the Maud Commission R eport "the analogy with the Central Government is a false one, because it would be impossible to associate all the individual members of Parliament with decision-making, as has become the practice in local government."

Let us now examine whether a cabinet system can be used profitably in Indian conditions. The following are some factors which do not favour the introduction of a cabinet system in municipal administration.

The size of the municipal councils is the greatest handicap. In India urban local bodies are classified into several classes i.e. Corporations, Class I, II, III and IV municipal boards. In Rajasthan there is also a Class V. In Uttar Pradesh there were 148 municipal boards in 1968, 39 of them were Class I, 32 Class II , 42 Class III and 35 Class IV. The membership of these boards is restricted from 10 to 40. In addition there are 5 municipal corporations whose membership ranges from 60 to 80 including Aldermen. As the members are elected on partisan basis and as there are many political parties in India, the strength of the members forming the majority group is likely to be very small and quite incapable of forming a Cabinet, treasury and opposition benches. There will be no uniformity if the system is introduced at some places and a majority of the local authorities are left out.

The existing system of municipal administration has developed certain traditions and has not proved an utter failure so as to force a complete change in the structure. The system has been existing in India for more than 200 years and has been reformed from time to time to suit changing conditions. While introducing reforms in municipal administration efforts were made to stimulate it and revitalise it.

The current thinking favours a separation of executive and deliberative functions. The Municipal Corporations are

organised on these lines. In England also, the Royal Commission on 'Management of Local Government' has recently advocated the idea of a management board.

In Municipal Boards the executive power is vested in the President, a political executive. He functions with the aid of a whole time executive officer and a number of functional committees. These committees provide an opportunity to all members to participate in the administration by serving on one or the other. This creates a sense of responsibility among them which is vital for municipal administration. It discourages irresponsible behaviour except when they have to give vent to their political ideologies. This arrangement provides a unity of purpose among the members which has maintained the smooth working of municipal institutions even in hours of crisis. The existence of an executive committee fulfils the need for coordination and at times it can take independent action relieving the council in minor matters.

The members in municipal institutions as they come more in direct contact with their constituents have a greater regard for their problems and difficulties irrespective of the party consideration. They have always an eye on building up their political image and carrier. Every member is a prima donna dependent on himself to maintain his popularity. He must keep his name before the electors by many devices.

The area served by municipal institutions is limited and the nature of the civic servicesis such that they cannot be used to serve the interest of a particular party or a particular area except in the matter of distributing charities

and benefits. These services govern the daily life of citizens. These do not concern large issues such as matter of location of an industry in a particular state or allocation of funds on the basis of political composition of a particular state.

The introduction of a cabinet system in municipal administration, it is feared, will entail many operational problems concerning the degree of local autonomy, the extent of financial resources and the internal administration. This will in particular require modification of the relationship between the mayor in the Municipal Corporations and the Commissioner and at lower levels between the Chairman/President and Executive Officers and other heads of departments who in many cases are drawn from the State Cadre. The cost of maintaining the Cabinet whose Ministers will be whole time servants may also not be financially viable for all the local authorities.

The municipal institutions will become another arena for political battles which have become a common scene in the Legislatures. Every question of civic services will acquire a political colour and ultimately the city and the citizens will be the victims of these feuds.

The Cabinet system in municipal administration would mean the placing of executive responsibility of a department or a group of departments in the hands of "municipal ministers". We may recall here the similar arrangement made in U.S.A. in the 'Commission' form of government which did not succeed. The Ministers may tend to treat the departments as their domain

A close working relationship between the Chief Executive and other officers may be hampered as the departmental heads will become subordinate to the political executives holding the charge of their respective department. This arrangement was also discussed by the Maud-Committee in England and they have not favoured it. The other disadvantages pointed out by them are as follows:-

(a) This would reduce the discretion and responsibility of the principal officer.

(b) It would substitute the fragmentation of 'ministerial responsibility' for the dispersal of responsibility among committees.

(c) From the organisation point of view, it may not be possible to reconcile the supervisory and coordinative role of the principal officer with the primary allegiance of departmental heads to individual members of the Cabinet.

These are some of the issues and questions which have to be given serious thought. Along with it weightage has also to be given to the current thinking on the question of reforms in municipal management. There is a substantial section of population which advocates the non-partisan character of mun icipal institutions which goes against the idea of a cabinet system. The attitude of state governments towards local bodies is not very helpful. Instead of giving freedom to them, their functions and powers are being encroached upon. The State governments are tightening their grip on local bodies by taking over more and more municipal functions,

by usurping the taxation powers, and by attaching strings with loans and grants. The dependence of local bodies on the state for financial assistance is increasing day by day. The people view these institutions as emblem of corruption, inefficiency and favouritism but are hesitant to take up bold action either to augment their local resources or embarking on drastic reforms.

The experience of the Cabinet System at national or state level has not been healthy and many people would like to give second thought to a parliamentary system.

THE CENTRE FOR TRAINING AND RESEARCH IN MUNICIPAL ADMINISTR ATION

Seminar on

'Cabinet System in Municipal Government',

September 15-16, 1969

Patterns of Municipal Structure

by

R.S. Gupta

Indian Institute of Public Administration
NEW DELHI.

PATTERNS OF MUNICIPAL STRUCTURE

by

R.S. Gupta

A discussion on the 'Cabinet System in Municipal Government' opens a bigger issue, viz. where, in the municipal government, the executive responsibility should lie? Should the executive responsibility be concentrated in one individual, whether he may be a Mayor or a Chief Executive Officer, or should it be in the hands of a body of persons, known as a Cabinet or a Management Board? In either case the executive body, whether consisting of a group of persons or an individual, performs a similar function, i.e. it recommends and initiates local government's policy; coordinates its business and sees that the Council's decisions are carried out. It, thus, supervises the local authority's administration.

A survey of municipal governments in various countries of the world reveals that, generally, the executive authority vests either in an individual or in a collegiate body. Ex amples, where the executive power vests in an individual are the Strong Mayor form of city government or the Council-Manager plan of local government in the United States of America. The Strong Mayor is directly elected by the vote of the people, whereas a City Manager is appointed by the Council. The form of Strong Mayor comes close to the Presidential system in the United States. The Mayor comes in and goes out with his team of top officers. He has the power to remove heads of departments and the staff without consulting the Council. He frames

financial appropriations are made by the Council which can over-rule the Strong Mayor by a two-third majority. The weakness of this system lies in the fact that the elected Mayor does not possess either the expertise or the time to efficiently supervise the multifarious activities of numerous municipal departments under him. On the other hand, the City Manager is a professional, trained administrator. After he is appointed, the deliberative wing refrains from interfering in his work. He appoints the departmental heads and the subordinate staff. All the administrative responsibility is concentrated in him. Despite all these advantages, it is felt that the Council Manager plan fails to provide the necessary political leadership for a bold approach to the problems of big cities. "The people of the large cities feel that political decisions should be made by a politically accountable official, the Mayor."[1] Hence in the big cities of the United States the chief executive is the Mayor and not an official, trained in municipal administration.

The above are the examples where the executive authority is located in an individual, whether he is a Mayor or a City Manager. On the other hand, there are countries where the executive responsibility is vested in a collegiate body,[2] known as the Management Board, composed mainly of elected councillors. This Board is a part of the structure of many local bodies, especially in the European countries,

---

1. Benjamin Baker, Urban Government, Honolulu, East-West Centre, 1965, p.147.

2. This collegiate body is known by different names in different countries, but for the sake of uniformity we are using the expression, 'The Management Board'.

which is responsible to the main representative organ for the preparation of policies and implementation of the decisions of the Council.

The manner in which the members of these Boards are elected by and from the Council differs from country to country. In the Netherlands, where generally three or four political parties are represented on the Council, the Board members are elected by the Council by majority vote, but the convention is to allocate the places on the Board among the parties approximately in proportion to their seats on the Council. In Sweden, on the contrary, the practice is for the majority party to nominate all the members on the Board. Thus, the Board is politically homogeneous as compared to the Board in the Netherlands. In Sweden, however, the Board Chairman is appointed by the Council from among the Board members, whereas in the Netherlands the Burgomaster (Mayor) presides over the meetings of the Board as well as the Council. Thus, in Sweden, the Mayor only presides at the meetings of the Council and acts as the city's ceremonial officer, and it is the Chairman of the Board who is considered as the most powerful person in the local authority. Further, in the Netherlands though each member of the Board has responsibility for a segment of the municipality's activities, yet the members cannot be considered as ministers as they are drawn from different political parties represented in the Council.

Besides these two patterns, where the executive responsibility vests either in an individual or in a group of persons elected by the members of the Council, there is a third

pattern which is found in the U.K. There the members of the Council as a whole are involved in the process of deciding as to what should be done, how it should be done and seeing whether it has been done or not. "In no formal sense is there a concept of a few selected members being entrusted with the function of divesting and controlling the activities of the authority and yet being responsible to the Council. There is no executive organ of government...."[3] However, in practice it is the committees of the Council which exercise lots of powers within their areas, as each major function or a group of functions is the responsibility of a committee.

The Case of India

The executive, as is found in the urban local bodies in India, is the product of a century old evolution. In the early days of British rule, the all-powerful Collector of the District used to be the Chairman of the local body and, in him were vested all the executive powers. He had at his disposal the entire official machinery of the district, which included District Engineer, District Medical Officer of Health and Inspector of Schools. The question of relations between the executive and the deliberative wings did not arise as most of the members of the Council were nominated by him. However, the question of executive powers became significant after the first world war when the Collector was replaced by an elected Chairman in the process of democratisation. Thus, the Chairman in the municipalities continued to exercise the executive powers although, subsequently, various Municipal Acts

3. Management of Local Government, (Maud Committee Report), Vol.I, London, H.M.S.O. 1967, p.24.

were modified and the position of a Chief Executive Officer was created, who could assist the Chairman in the exercise of his ex ecutive functions. Today, all the States of the Indian Union, except Assam and West Bengal, have the provision for the appointment of an Executive Officer in their Municipal Acts, whose main job is to assist the Chairman in the discharge of executive functions.

The position in respect to the municipal corporations, however, is different from those seen in the municipalities. In the corporations there is strict separation between the deliberative wing and the executive wing. The deliberative wing, which is presided over by the Mayor, is only concerned with the policy formulation. The Mayor is only the ceremonial head and the first citizen of the city. The head of the executive wing is the Municipal Commissioner who is the chief executive officer in the municipal corporation. The Commissioners in all the corporations are deputed by the State Governments, from among the senior officers of the State, generally for a period of three years. It is they who are responsible for the execution of the policies and coordinate the functions of various departments in the municipal corporations and control the staff.

Conclusions:- However, it may be recalled that the urban local bodies in India are not modelled on the pattern of the American local government but largely on the pattern of the British system, excepting, perhaps, the Corporations. Hence, in India, like in Britain, we find the size of the Council

rather large, and several committees in the local government. In our country, to a large extent, the executive power is divided between the Council, the Chairman/Mayor, the Standing Committee and the Chief Executive Officer/Municipal Commissioner. The executive responsibility is not concentrated either in an individual or in a collegiate body, as seen in the case of some foreign countries. Thus, this trend in the municipal Acts, that is to create a number of statutory authorities for the purposes of administration,[4] is not a healthy one. This fragmentation of executive authority is largely responsible for mismanagement in municipal administration in India. Hence, for smooth functioning of the municipal government it is necessary that the executive responsibility should be concentrated either in an individual or in a collegiate body, to be called either a Cabinet or a Management Board.

---

4. For example, under the Delhi Municipal Corporation Act, 1957, there are the following authorities to carry out different functions:

a) The Standing Committee; b) the Delhi Electric Supply Committee; c) the Delhi Transport Committee; d) The Delhi Water Supply and Sewage Disposal Committee; e) The Commissioner; f) The General Manager (Electricity); and g) The General Manager (Transport).

"The present position, as prescribed by the Delhi Municipal Corporation Act, is very anomalous. In brief, the anomaly is that, whereas the executive responsibility for running the Corporation's administration is entirely that of the Commissioner, he does not have a complete authority over the administrative machine to enforce discipline to be able to deliver the goods...." These are the remarks, made by Shri R.N. Chopra, present Commissioner of Municipal Corporation of Delhi, vide the Statesman, New Delhi, August 28, 1969.

It may be pointed out here that even in U.K. where the Council is supreme, the Committee on the Management of Local Government (the Maud Committee) has recommended in its Report that the local authorities should establish a managing body, to be called "the Management Board", composed of from five to nine members of the Council, with the following functions:

"(a) To formulate the principal objectives of the authority and to present them to-gether with plans to attain them to the Council for consideration and decision.

(b) To review progress and assess results on behalf of the Council.

(c) To maintain, on behalf of the Council, an overall supervision of the organisation of the authority and its coordination and integration.

(d) To take decisions on behalf of the Council which exceed the authority of the principal officers, and to recommend decisions to the Council where authority has not been delegated to the management board; (and)

(e) To be responsible for the presentation of business to the Council subject always to the rights of members under standing orders."[5]

It is not desirable to copy the British system in every respect. Perhaps, under the present conditions in India, it will be better to follow the Council-Manager plan, with some modifications, where the Council chalks out the policies and the trained manager implements them. This system is being suggested for the following reasons: (a) The councillors/mayors in India only devote part of their time to manage

5. Report of the Committee on the Management of Local Government, op.cit., p.42.

city's affairs and continue to look after their business and other means of livelihood as, unlike Western countries, they are not paid any salaries from the funds of local authority; and (b) the Councillors/mayors are not trained administrators. Their participation in local government, by and large, is only their first experience in managing public affairs. Hence, it is better if they formulate broad policies and leave its implementation on the trained administrators.

THE CENTRE FOR TRAINING AND RESEARCH IN MUNICIPAL ADMINISTRATION

Seminar on

'Cabinet System in Municipal Government"

September 15-16, 1969

The Cabinet System in Municipal Government

by
Ziauddin Khan
Department of Public Administration
Rajasthan University

The Indian Institute of Public Administration
NEW DELHI-1.

"THE CABINET SYSTEM IN MUNICIPAL GOVERNMENT"

Local Government in India has been largely influenced by the British system as in central and state governments. While, parliamentary form of Executive has been adopted at the Central and state levels, it has not been extended to local government. Now in the re-assessment of the working of Local Government, many difficulties and weaknesses have been pointed out. It is asserted that "the work of Local Government is becoming more closely involved with matters in economic sphere and is increasingly demanding positive and constructive action."[1]

The general characteristics of Local Government in India drawn from the British local government system are as follows:-

(1) Territorial division of the city into wards for electoral purposes, constituting single member or multiple member constituencies.

(ii) Elected members constituting the council are responsible for general supervision and control.

(iii) Elected Chairman or mayor represents the Chief Executive. He is assisted in some places by a Commissioner.

(iv) The Council constitutes three or four essential committees to supervise the important functions.

(v) Chairman of these committees come in contact with the departmental heads like the Health Officer, Engineer, Education Officer etc.

---

1. Report of the Committee on the Management of Local Government, Vol.I, P.22.

(vi) The Chairman or the Mayor elected by the Council is responsible for initiation in general policy making and coordination.

The main defects pointed out by the committee on the management of local government in Britain (Maud Committee Report) on this are as follows:-

(i) Defects in the present structures of stress, authorities and functions.

(ii) A declining degree of home rule enjoyed by local authorities due to increasing loss of faith by Parliament, Ministers and Whitehall departments in the responsibility of locally elected bodies.

(iii) The survival of the 19th century tradition that Councillors must concern themselves with actual details of day to day administration.

(iv) There is often too wide a gulf between the Governors and the Governed.

In order to cure the local government of these evils Maud Committee has suggested four institutional changes, two positive, two negative. The two positive changes proposed are:-

(i) The use of a management board of five to nine members to lead and coordinate the work of the Council.

(ii) the elevation of the Clerk to be head of the Council's paid service and to be responsible to the Board and through it to the Council.

The two negative changes proposed are:-

(i) the abolition of Committees as decision-making bodies and, therefore, of Chairmen of committees as significant

figures.

(ii) the down grading of the status of Chief Officers other than that of the Clerk.

Prof. D.N. Chester has criticised this Maud's model on the following grounds[2]:-

(i) the Management board members in a large and busy authority would become involved in the affairs of an authority on what might be a full time basis. He would require an office and supporting staff to enable him to do his work.

(ii) He would in effect become the head of the Department with the principal officer - as his subordinate. T his would place on the member responsibilities for which he is not trained.

(iii) It would substitute the fragmentation of ministerial responsibility for the disposal of responsibility amongst committees. The unity we are seeking to establish might be prevented by the service and departmental interests of the individual management board members.

(iv) That the establishment of firm lines of accountability between the principal officers and individual members of the management board makes the position of the Clerk untenable. From the organisation point of view it is not possible to reconcile the supervisory and coordinative role of the Clerk with the primary allegiance of principal officers to individual management board members.

Against this background we have to reassess our own experiences in India. In the process of "R eforms in M unicipal administration", a syndicate Report has put forth the cabinet

2. Journal of the Royal Institute of Public Administration 1968, Vol.46, P.268.

system of Government in Municipal administration as the solvent of our difficulties in local administration. The grounds putforth by the Syndicate in support of the cabinet system are as follows:[3]

(i) It will effect perfect coordination.

(ii) It will effect close association between policy making and its implementation.

(iii) The cabinet shall work as a bridge between Council and administration consisting of appointed officials.

(iv) It will have continuity of leadership between the Council and the Executive.

(v) It will be accountable to the Council and will establish greater democratic control.

In reviewing the suggestions for the adoption of cabinet system in Municipal administration certain doubts arise which can not easily be discarded.

Ordinarily one success should lead to another. On the contrary, in the present context, one failure leads to another. Have we really succeeded in the working of parliamentary type of Executive in the Central and State Governments?

In analysing the causes of the failure we must remind ourselves of the history that is led to the adoption of the parliamentary type of Government in India. It was thought to be "Fur-cost-Constitution" that might not spit the Indian climate. Doubts were expressed about its original motives and it was introduced in a half hearted manner based on distrust

3. Syndicate Report on Reforms in Municipal Administration: The Bombay Civic Journal, June, 1969, p.29.

which was rampant in the round table conferences that proceeded the formulation of the various acts resulting in the introduction of some semblence of parliamentary executive in the state.

In our stride towards advancement, we stepped further, its full adoption from the states to the centre. This halting measure introduced with a doubting mind was not expected to see the full bloom of Parliamentary Executive.

The transplantation of parliamentary institution from the British to the Indian soil required a careful nursing. We in our haste to make the Executive an instrument at great change, ignored that this type of Executive required not merely a solid party majority support inside, but also a minority support and cooperation and change in the people's attitude that democracy was not a measure of majority over minority, but a measure of majority plus majority.

This type of executiv ealso requires sharpening of people's opinion on political issues and emerging into as few political parties as possible, each ready to form alternative Government. The monolith Congress party almost smoothered the opposition for a long time and the opposition could not grow in the manner desirable.

Parliamentary Executive requires important conventions to be developed. These conventions are evolved out of the consensus in which the party in power and the opposition are involved. Conventions are delicate expedients and they need to be nourished and nurtured in the course of repeated practices

and they develop their own sanctions. We are not yet sure about the values of these conventions. We have not developed the common set of conventions. We have not yet developed the common set of conventions. We have not yet accorded the sanctity that is to be given to them. We are not sure even about the fundamentals of Parliamentary executive which are all covered by the conventions.

The parliamentary type of executive assumes a nominal Chief Executive. In our case Chief executive may be the President at the Centre and the Governors in the States. Our bags are full with woes against the "Misuse" of their powers as nominal chief executives in the garb of the agents of the President with directives from the Government in power at the centre different from the party in power in the states. We must know that most of the troubles in the state politics have come because of our ill digested notions about parliamentary executive.

If the things are vague and confused at the state headquarters, it would not be a wise step to extend the same haze to the cities and add confusion to already confused city governments.

First of all, we must be very clear about the objectives of local government. During the hey day of Panchayati R aj it was often declared that Pramukhs and Pradhans were "the diminutive Chief ministers "at the district and Panchayat Samiti levels. As a result we have seen the drama of unhappy official and non-official relationship. It must be very clear that the aims and objectives at the district level are different

from those at Municipal level. The narrower the area of authority, the more clear should be the conception of power free from political bias and more directed towards satisfying the people's needs irrespective of political ideologies.

If Local Government is the best school of democracy, the education, we need in the areas is the education in close collaboration between the officials and non-officials; amateurs and specialists, professions and practices and above all, learning the lessons of realities of life with proper apportioning of responsibilities. The leaders emerging at these levels will be sobered down by the touch of administrative feasibility. They should believe that foundations of democracy are laid when political consensus is evolved at the local levels. Party edges are blunt at a level where high philosophies and ideologies fade into administrative realities. Success of democracy depends upon close inter-action between officials and non-officials at this level. The leaders emerging through these schools of democracy will bear the marks of realism, sobriety, general out-look subordination of smaller interests to larger causes. These leaders trained at an early stages of their contact with the people will be in a better position to conduct the affairs at higher levels with greater confidence and without making much ado over the preliminaries which are often wrongly raised at higher levels these days.

My submission is that a parliamentary type of executive has four fundamentals:-

(i) The nominal chief executive representing the state. It may be discovered at the centre and the state levels. It

may be difficult to find one at the district and city levels.

(ii) The leader of the majority party in the legislature forms cabinet government with ministers drawn from his own party. In the local Government sphere where political differences are not so sharp, total exclusion of the opposition in policy formulation is not healthy as it may result in faulty implementation of policy without the cooperation of the opposition.

(iii) The parliamentary cabinet system assumes a collective responsibility which in practice is not strictly followed. On the other hand there is a pre-eminent emergence of the Prime-minister as "The Leader". The emergence of the Prime Minister is the work of ages based on a continuous procession of practices, precedents, crystallising into routine to be followed.

The relationship between the Prime Minister and the executive is a delicate one based on conventions which have never been fully codified. We lack the proper perspective to understand the need of such conventions. We have failed at the centre and state levels and I am sure, we are bound to fail at the local level. Add to the tussel between the Prime Minister and the Chief executive and the new discussion of the President of the party organisation and the Prime Minister. By adopting cabinet system in city government we would be widening the horizon of the 'Haze' prevailing at the Centre and state levels.

(iv) Another point to be noted is the role of the people in the disputes between the two organs of the Government -

the executive and the legislature. Whenever a vote of no-confidence is passed against the cabinetexecutive by the legislature or council, the Prime Minister or the cabinet has the right to dissolve the legislature or the Council. We have not paid heed to such counsels when dethroned Chief Ministers had the courage to put them forth. The result is stability without foundation and a continuous cloud of instability hanging over "stable executive."

Thus when we are not sure of the perfect functioning of the cabinet system at the central and state levels, let us not in haste hail the cabinet system as the hallmark of success in Municipal Government.
